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Full Name of Author — Nom complet de l'auteur

WENDY LYNN KERSTEEN

Date of Birth — Date de naissance

AUGUST 19, 1949

Country of Birth — Lieu de naissance

CANADA

Permanent Address — Résidence fixe

325 QUEEN'S COURT
EDMONTON, ALBERTA
T6J 2E5

Title of Thesis — Titre de la thèse

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Name of Supervisor — Nom du directeur de thèse

DR. P. J. MILLER

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by

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(Signed) Wendy Lynn Kersteen

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

325 Queen's Court
Edmonton, Alberta
T6J 2E5

DATED April 27th, 1981

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Early Works of Mary Wollstonecraft: An Analysis of the Importance of Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, Mary, A Fiction, and Original Stories to the Evolution of Wollstonecraft's Educational, Political, and Moral Philosophy submitted by Wendy Lynn Kersteen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in History of Education.

....

Supervisor

Gary Kelly

Nick Kach

Date 19 December 1980

ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to show that the nature of the experimentation which characterizes Mary Wollstonecraft's early work is central and important to an understanding of her thought as a whole and has been unjustly neglected. The attempt to reassess the significance of Wollstonecraft's early work naturally divides itself into three major areas of concern: first, the origin and development of the ideas that shape the early work's pedagogical recommendations; second, the relationship between Wollstonecraft's pedagogy and her ideas in general; and third, the relationship between Wollstonecraft's early and late works.

The attempt to see Wollstonecraft's early work in the context of late eighteenth-century pedagogical, literary, and philosophic traditions requires a considerable amount of detail.

Chapter I provides a review of the literature on Wollstonecraft and outlines the general questions that must be considered if the evolution of Wollstonecraft's pedagogical ideas is to be appreciated or properly valued.

Chapter II considers more specific questions and provides a brief discussion of Wollstonecraft's relation to her contemporaries, a biographical sketch of her early life, and a basic outline of her educational views. These introductory remarks serve to build the background material or general overview which later chapters draw on and add to.

Chapters III, IV, and V form the main body of the thesis and concentrate on textual analysis of the early works. Chapter III deals with Thoughts on the Education of Daughters and Mary, A Fiction;

Chapters IV and V with Original Stories. All the early work is seen herein as a species of philosophical enquiry, but Original Stories's investigation of the relationship between pedagogy and epistemology or between pedagogy and morality represents a turning point in Wollstonecraft's career, and thus discussion of it is lengthy.

Later developments in that career and in Wollstonecraft's life are discussed in Chapter VI which attempts to describe and as far as possible to explain the changes that occurred in her pedagogy and in her thought in general.

The concluding chapter summarizes and attempts to interpret the pattern of development revealed by the analysis undertaken in the thesis and to assess the significance of Wollstonecraft's contribution as a theorist of women's education and her place in the history of ideas in a more general sense.

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In this study quotations from eighteenth-century sources preserve the original idiosyncrasies and numerous inconsistencies of spelling and punctuation without the additional acknowledgement of sic which was deemed cumbersome and intrusive.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Mary Wollstonecraft was born in 1759 and died in 1797, and she lived a life that cannot fail to capture the interest of anyone fascinated by paradox. She was a didactic moralist and a romantic lyricist, an eighteenth-century "lady" and a radical feminist, a severe critic of sensuality and libertinism and a sexually passionate woman and unwed mother. She was also a governess, teacher, reviewer, novelist, polemicist, historian, and educational theorist. And, in an age that assumed women to be incapable of intellect, she was a major intellectual.

Wollstonecraft's career lasted a short ten years and was fully as unpredictable as her life. She published *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* in 1787, followed by *Mary, A Fiction* and *Original Stories* in 1788; she compiled an anthology for girls' education entitled *The Female Reader* (published in 1789), wrote for *The Analytical Review*,[1] and translated and adapted for English publication Campe's *New Robinson Crusoe*, Lavater's *Physiognomie*, Necker's *On the Importance of Religious Opinions*, Mme de Cambon's *Young Grandison*, and Salzmann's *Elements of Morality*.[2] At the age of thirty-one she was a self-educated spinster who had, thanks to her pen, achieved financial independence. Unusual, perhaps, for the eighteenth century, but not extraordinary. With the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in 1790, the unusual became the extraordinary, and she became a public figure almost overnight. Her answer to Burke had been an impassioned defence of men's inalienable rights, a defence which created a considerable stir even before its author was known to be a woman. Wollstonecraft continued to work for *The Analytical*, but the assignments she was given now reflected her new-found importance. Then, early in 1792, she published A Vindication of the Rights of Woman -- the book which at one stroke made her reputation permanent and irrevocable and carried it not only beyond England to the continent but beyond her own time into history. It was a remarkable accomplishment, and the woman who five years before had been a governess in Ireland and only two years before merely one of those on the periphery of London's radical circle suddenly moved to the forefront of the English intelligentsia. Contributing to English radicalism, and giving force to it, was, of course, the French Revolution, and shortly after the completion of the second Vindication Wollstonecraft travelled to Paris to study the Revolution at first hand. She was disappointed with what she found. In 1793 she wrote (but did not publish) her "Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation" which was followed in 1794 by the publication of her A Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution and in 1796 by the lyrical and romantic Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. After her death her husband, William Godwin, edited the Posthumous Works of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" which was published in 1798 and included Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel, The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria, and her letters to Johnson and Imlay.[3]

Out of the relatively small and diverse canon of works that Wollstonecraft's ten-year career produced, only one book has aroused public or critical response to any appreciable degree. That book is, of course, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, and on its perceived merits or faults Mary Wollstonecraft's reputation has come to rest. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman is a great book, just as it is Mary Wollstonecraft's best book; it is fair that she should be remembered and judged by it, but it is unfortunate that it has been allowed to eclipse all her other works to the degree that it can be said to have thrown them -- often undeservedly -- into the shadow of obscurity.

Wollstonecraft wrote "educational romances",[4] and to understand her works it is necessary to understand both what she meant by education and the value she placed on it. In this respect, it is particularly unfortunate that the relationship between her educational and her political belief and between her early and late work has been so little explored, for it is the evolution of her thought that determines her significance both as a feminist and as an educationist.

When Wollstonecraft began writing she shared the typical assumptions of her day about women, education, and society; later, she rejected these values and re-defined herself as a revolutionary; and finally, she moved into a stage of integration which for want of a better word may be called pre-romantic. And it was precisely those romantic themes that twentieth-century thought and literature have adopted that Wollstonecraft emphasized: in her concentration on self-analysis, psychological integration, and personal identity she dealt with concerns -- feminist, educational, and literary -- which tend to be thought of as distinctly "modern". As well, in the expression of her contempt for what she refers to as "Fat contented ignorance",[5] she consciously developed a personal and powerful rhetoric and in so doing experimented with structure, style, and narrative subjectivity again in a strikingly "modern" manner.

Throughout the drastic upheavals in her social and political thought, her faith in education as the means to regenerate both the individual and society as a whole remained constant, thus unifying, and to some extent complicating, the development of her thought. It is tempting, but ultimately misleading, to see Wollstonecraft as a religious conservative who upon losing her faith became a political radical and then, disillusioned by the failure of the French Revolution, retreated to the individualism of romanticism. Mary Wollstonecraft's work does go through these stages, but in her work such stages are neither discrete nor easily identifiable; nor do they follow in a simple linear or chronological progression.

The complexity inherent in the evolution of Mary Wollstonecraft's thought necessitates the re-assessment of her relevance to the literary tradition, particularly the female tradition, and the re-evaluation of her place in the educational history of ideas.

Review of the Literature

Given the amount of work produced on Wollstonecraft in the last ten or fifteen years, it is clear that this re-assessment has to some extent already begun. Most of her original work has been re-issued and, if not always readily accessible, is at least available to the modern reader. The 1970s alone produced no fewer than six new biographies, annotated editions of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Mary, A Fiction, The Wrongs of Woman, and Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, a new Wollstonecraft Anthology, an annotated bibliography of the works written by and on Wollstonecraft, and the first complete edition of her letters.[6] Wollstonecraft scholarship did not, however, begin in the 1970s, and before discussing the work of this period a survey of the work that preceded it is advisable.

William Godwin's Memoirs of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman", published a few months after his wife's death and written at least in part to expiate his own grief, is by far the most moving and intimate portrait we have of Wollstonecraft and one to which, more than any other single document, modern scholarship is indebted.[7] That its author is a newly-grieving husband is obvious. No less obvious is the fact that Godwin was no ordinary husband erecting a monument to his wife's memory, but one of the leading intellects of his day and on principle a scrupulously honest and impartial man. He no doubt saw things in the light most advantageous to his wife, but he also had information that more objective biographers are denied (and which would most certainly have been lost had he not recorded it). Refusing to sacrifice fact to propriety, he used that information to tell her story as straightforwardly and accurately as he could, much to the embarrassment of those of her friends who were less indifferent to public opinion than he. Ironically, the restraint and truthfulness which characterize his account seemed cold and brazen to his contemporaries, and by making her unconventionality public, he exposed her (as well as himself) to attack.

Mary Wollstonecraft would have been attacked, Memoirs or not, because of her association with radical thought in a period that was quickly becoming vehemently reactionary. Godwin's Memoirs merely provided additional grounds which could be used to justify attack: not only was she a hated "Jacobin", but, by what seemed to her critics her own husband's admission, she was an immoral and promiscuous woman. Of course, to the Anti-Jacobins and to the populace at large, radicalism in a woman was even more sinful and "unnatural" than it was in a man, and in short order the attacks on Wollstonecraft came to revolve around her sex. In comparison to the Reverend Richard Polwhele's treatment of her in his poem "The Unsex'd Females" (1798), Horace Walpole's references to her as a "philosophizing serpent" or a "hyena in petticoats" look almost complimentary.[8] The Anti-Jacobin Review was even less restrained than Polwhele in its criticism.[9] These attacks continued unabated into the early years of the nineteenth century; thereafter, for a good many years, Mary Wollstonecraft was consigned to oblivion. But the reactionary attack on her was not without its longterm effects, for while Godwin may have been content to let the facts speak for themselves and wise enough to resist the impulse to apology, later biographers were not, and to this day Wollstonecraft scholarship would seem to have moved in endless cycles of attack and defense.

The first published defence was made by Mary Hays in a biographical sketch of Mary Wollstonecraft published in Annual Necrology in 1800. This was followed in 1803 by an anonymous piece entitled A Defence of the Character and Conduct of the late Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. Both of these are marred by their apologetic tone; they attempt to exonerate Wollstonecraft of the charges brought against her morality by arguing that her motives were pure and her intentions honorable, even if the same could not always be said of her actions: her mistakes were mistakes, but they were the mistakes of principle not of licentiousness. A period of relative silence followed; then late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century biographers took up the cause and adopted a similar line of defence. C. Kegan Paul's William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries (1876) and his "Prefatory Memoir" to Wollstonecraft's Letters to Imlay (which he republished in 1879), Elizabeth Robins Pennell's Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (1885), Roger Ingpen's "Prefatory Memoir" to his edition of The Love Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft to Gilbert Imlay (1908), Madeline Linford's Mary Wollstonecraft (1924), and Henry R. James's Mary Wollstonecraft: A Sketch (1932) all tend to ignore, deny, or downplay the unconventional aspects of Wollstonecraft's behavior that the late eighteenth century had pronounced immoral. If these biographers are to be believed, Wollstonecraft was little less than a saint, albeit a charming and bewitchingly romantic one. The decision of the anti-Jacobin critics is reversed, and Mary Wollstonecraft becomes the perfect nineteenth-century woman: properly "womanly"; full of feminine sympathy, warmth, and benevolence; domestically rather than sexually passionate; conventionally religious; and, in the words of H.R. James, "predestined to wifehood and motherhood".[10] James is the most adamant of these sentimentalists, and it must in all fairness be said that he openly confesses to having fallen "under Mary Wollstonecraft's spell";[11] his strongest criticism of her is to deplore the lack of appreciation of chivalry that she displays in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman -- it is a telling remark.

Nonetheless, the sympathetic interpretations offered in these biographies are no more one-sided than the attacks of the previous century, and they are in general more fully researched and documented. C.K. Paul in particular deserves our gratitude for reviving interest in her, for re-issuing her letters to Imlay, and for gaining access to the Shelley papers and subsequently publishing previously unavailable letters in his William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries. Elizabeth Robins Pennell, by writing the first full-length biography of Wollstonecraft, also helped to direct attention, particularly feminist attention, to her and thus was in part responsible for the new editions of Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman which appeared in 1890 and 1892.

In 1937 a new biography of Wollstonecraft appeared: it was entitled This Shining Woman and, according to its title page, written by a George Preedy. The reader who takes one look at the title and decides that this is yet another romantic portrait of the fairest of feminists is in for a considerable shock. George Preedy was in fact a Mrs. Gabrielle Campbell Long, and in her zeal to vindicate what she calls "feminine instincts and passions" she displays the archetypal ambivalence of the feminine towards the feminist woman -- she is simultaneously fascinated and repelled by Wollstonecraft. Given this, the book is not unnaturally a study in contradiction. Long wants to like the woman and is moved by many of the things that happened to her, but ultimately she cannot forgive Wollstonecraft for suggesting women should "give up their cherished privileges for unwanted rights". Thus she delights in what she sees as Wollstonecraft's falling "victim to her own passion" and ending "a self-confessed failure" by attempting suicide and even goes so far as to assert that Wollstonecraft came to realize that love was all that mattered and renounced her belief in "women's rights". In its desire to expose "women's rights" for the travesty it believes them to be, and in its willingness to distort the facts to advance its case, Long's book represents a return to the kind of attack made on Wollstonecraft in the late eighteenth century. Long does not, however, advocate a straightforward condemnation of Wollstonecraft and is careful to approve of her energy, even of her independent spirit, and to state that other women should not "refuse her memory sympathy, understanding and some admiration".[12]

And this is a good deal more than can be said of Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham who in their Modern Woman: The Lost Sex (1947) not only delight but revel in Mary Wollstonecraft's "bowing down before Imlay",[13] trace her feminism to "penis envy", and with eighteenth-century fervour and twentieth-century technique pronounce her "unnatural". Their interpretation, drawn from the material presented in This Shining Woman (which is none too reliable in the first place), a sketchy reading of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, and their own clinical observation of neurotics, is full of factual errors and is neither responsible history nor responsible psychoanalysis. Lundberg and Farnham are perhaps all the more culpable because an intelligent and cautious use of psychoanalytical techniques might have yielded interesting results, as it was later to do in the hands of better historians.

Three notable exceptions in the early work on Wollstonecraft which conform neither to the defence nor the attack pattern are H.N. Brailsford's Shelley, Godwin and Their Circle (1913), Virginia Woolf's essay on Mary Wollstonecraft in The Second Common Reader (1932), and W. Clark Durant's "Supplement" to his edition of Godwin's Memoirs (1927). Both Brailsford and Woolf provide succinct, intelligent, and balanced interpretations of Wollstonecraft. But here their similarities end. Brailsford is interested in assessing the significance of the feminist and social thinker, Woolf in exploring the complexities and contradictions of the woman. The contribution made by W. Clark Durant is of yet another sort. To Durant, as to the romantic biographers discussed earlier, Wollstonecraft was a "much maligned heroine",[14] and his "Supplement" is self-evidently and self-confessedly a labour of love; it is also the result of diligent and painstaking research. In collecting and preserving all the information that his research could recover (including the reiteration and often the clarification of Godwin's information, the addition of new facts, the reprinting of many of her letters some of which had never before been published, the presentation of extensive extracts from her books and occasionally from her reviews in The Analytical, and the publication of long excerpts from the numerous references to her in the letters and journals of her contemporaries) he made an invaluable contribution to Wollstonecraft scholarship and one to which modern work is greatly indebted.

Modern Wollstonecraft scholarship begins with Ralph M. Wardle's Mary Wollstonecraft: A Critical Biography, published in 1951. Wardle's book attempts to verify the facts of Wollstonecraft's life as presented by Godwin and other early biographers, to correct them where necessary, and to add to them where possible. As well, it attempts to place her life in historical and her work in literary context by discussing the moral and political beliefs and the literary conventions of the period. The scholarly groundwork laid by Wardle and the stimulus lent to the topic by the recent re-emergence of feminism as an active social issue have lead to a proliferation of work on Wollstonecraft. This work is, on the whole, both more accurate and more sophisticated than that produced in the nineteenth and early half of the twentieth century.

Edna Nixon's Mary Wollstonecraft: Her Life and Times (1971) and Jean Detre's A Most Extraordinary Pair: Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin (1975) are the outstanding exceptions to this rule. Nixon's book is pretentious, bland, and insufficiently documented, leading the reader to conclude that either its author has a secret source of information or is simply making it up as she goes along to fill in the gaps and round out her story. Jean Detre's A Most Extraordinary Pair, on the other hand, is at least in part a self-consciously fictional work, for Detre attempts to tell the story of the last year of Wollstonecraft's life in her (Wollstonecraft's) own words by using her letters to Godwin and by imagining what she would have had to say in her journal, had she kept one. The result is neither history nor fiction, although it displays the weakness of both and the strengths of neither. Its one advantage (unintentional though it is) is that it demonstrates what has been so little appreciated about Wollstonecraft -- that she is, in fact, a superb stylist, for the wit, vigor, and humour of the letters stand out with a brilliant clarity from the journal entries which are a deliberate attempt to imitate her style.

Margaret George's One Woman's Situation (1970), Eleanor Flexner's Mary Wollstonecraft (1972), Claire Tomalin's The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft (1974), and Emily Sunstein's A Different Face (1975) are more typical of the modern renaissance in Wollstonecraft scholarship. On the one hand, the original research undertaken by Flexner, Tomalin, and Sunstein has unearthed new facts about Wollstonecraft's life, the people she lived it with, and the political and moral environment she lived it in. On the other, George's analysis of that life from a feminist point of view (specifically from the point of view taken by Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex) and Sunstein's perceptive and subtle interpretations of the psychological dilemmas Wollstonecraft found herself in contribute to our understanding of the character and temperament of the woman. Successful as these biographies are in the main, they are not without their flaws, and no one of them (though Sunstein comes closest) can be said to have replaced Wardle's book as the seminal work on Wollstonecraft, although each of them makes a valuable addition to it.

The best of modern scholarship, then, is scrupulous in detail and careful to place Wollstonecraft in historical context. Nonetheless, it, like the earlier work, seems unable to resist the temptation to explain and judge Wollstonecraft in terms of her motives.[15] Moreover, the whole concept of motive or intention has in this century been given a new impetus and a new meaning by the popularity of psychoanalytical theorizing and if this new knowledge has proved useful to biographers, it also carries with it the danger of reducing "cultural history to the psychology of individuals".[16] Further, as psychoanalysis is itself a twentieth-century phenomenon, any retroactive application of its techniques gives a "modern" colouring to resulting interpretations. Thus, while nineteenth-century biography often seems naive in imputing all of Wollstonecraft's actions to noble or altruistic motives, twentieth-century biography -- including the very best of it -- often seems cynical and hypercritical in implying the opposite.

It is probable, however, that the fundamental problem lies not with individual biographers but with biography itself. The attempt to explain one person's life is to some degree an exercise in solipsism or at least in isolation: regardless of how carefully the biographer seeks to place his subject in context, the temptation to compare the individual being studied to some current ideal rather than to other real people (past or present) remains paramount and presents a very real difficulty. This is particularly true in Wollstonecraft biography -- the woman's personality is so flamboyant, her life so dramatic, and her work so vigorously self-assured that to paint her in shades of grey seems impossible. From the beginning, she seems typecast to play the strong roles of either saint or sinner. Thus, nineteenth-century biography moves from attack to defence and back again in different books; modern scholarship's attempt to avoid such black and white extremes merely appears to have succeeded in that it has incorporated both extremes without in any real way reconciling them. To varying degrees, then, Wollstonecraft's modern biographers alternate between sympathy and praise on the one hand and an almost personal annoyance on the other: her courage and her energy are commended, her arrogance and often even her vulnerability criticized, and, in the cyclical alternating responses to her personality, her ideas are largely ignored.

This is not to say that Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas have never been discussed, but merely that the attempt to define the woman has seduced many of her biographers into a stance which implies that the origin and development of her ideas are of secondary importance. The ideas themselves are too often only cursorily examined or, worse yet, treated as a species of emotion -- an approach which encourages the critic to look upon her works not as intellectual or literary achievements, but as historical documents which reveal her personality or the social attitudes or literary conventions of the day. Wollstonecraft the woman would seem to fascinate with a compulsion so thorough as to forbid Wollstonecraft the intellectual being taken at all seriously, as if such consideration would somehow dilute or dissipate the force of the personality and thus break the magic spell woven by the story. Thus, even the success of her best book, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, is typically attributed to her "passionate female nature",[17] as if this, whatever it may be, precluded or at least always took precedence over her qualities of mind. Finally, the power and originality of the Vindication cannot be disputed and thus must be credited in one way or another, but the crediting itself is often ill-natured and compensated for by carping about everything else in the book -- its organization, its style, its exaggeration, its criticisms of other writers. And if this is the treatment her best work merits in the eyes of critics, it is not surprising that most of her other work is likely to be dismissed in a few paragraphs. The one general exception to this rule is Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, because insofar as it is perceived as the somewhat cleaned up -- and therefore suitably restrained -- ramblings of a broken heart, it reinforces rather than interferes with the telling of the story.

Wollstonecraft biographers are not the only (and perhaps, given the task of biography, not even the chief) offenders in this respect. But insofar as they fail to grasp -- or to make clear in their work -- that Wollstonecraft was who she was and wrote what she wrote not only because she was a woman who had suffered certain kinds of basic "injustices" but also because she had a certain kind of mind or intellect, they have prepared the way for the shoddy treatment Wollstonecraft has by and large received in twentieth-century criticism. The recognition that Wollstonecraft brought not only passion but intellectual perception and power, not only practical or personal but also theoretical knowledge, to her subject is necessary if her work is to be understood, or her contribution to the history of ideas properly valued.

G.R. Stirling Taylor's Mary Wollstonecraft: A Study in Economics and Romance, published in 1911, was the first attempt to study this aspect of Wollstonecraft's thought, and it remains in many ways the closest thing to a full-length biography of the mind that Wollstonecraft scholarship has produced. Wollstonecraft, according to Taylor, was a genius in the romantic sense of the word -- that is, one who simultaneously possesses extraordinary intellectual powers and highly volatile emotions, or one who is both unusually open to experience and unusually able to subject it to the analysis of the mind. In his opinion, it is her "passionate intelligence" or her "evangelist's mind"[18] that makes her life interesting, and, instead of being repelled by her arrogance and frustrated by her contradictory behavior (as many of her biographers have been), it is exactly these qualities that he finds most appealing in her. Because he grants her all the prerogatives of genius, he is able to write a straightforwardly sympathetic biography without being forced to retreat either to a naive distortion of fact to defend her actions or to an ultrasophisticated analysis of underlying fears and anxieties to explain her "mistakes". If, in the process, he overemphasizes her difference from ordinary mortals, the role of genius is a refreshing change from that of saint or sinner, heroine or neurotic, and probably a good deal closer to the truth as well.

Other early attempts to examine Wollstonecraft's ideas include Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough's A Study of Mary Wollstonecraft and the Rights of Woman (1898), Jacob Bouten's Mary Wollstonecraft and the Beginnings of Female Emancipation in France and England (1922), and Ida B. O'Malley's Women in Subjection (1933).

Rauschenbusch-Clough's investigation of Wollstonecraft's ideas leads her to conclude that Wollstonecraft was an early socialist and to argue that even her pedagogical views, influenced though they were by Locke and Rousseau, basically derived from her peculiar brand of socialism. Bouten's book follows Rauschenbusch-Clough's and makes use of it in tracing the influences on Wollstonecraft's thought. Unfortunately, with the exception of his analysis of Rousseau's impact on Wollstonecraft's philosophy, Bouten has little to say on the topic that Rauschenbusch-Clough has not already said better. And, ironically, it is his attempt to correct the weakness in her book by relating the development of Wollstonecraft's ideas to her life's experiences that delivers him into real difficulty, for in the attempt he is undermined by his own ambivalence: Wollstonecraft the woman he praises unremittingly; Wollstonecraft the feminist he qualifies out of existence.

Bouten's uneasiness about what he fears may be the logical conclusion of Wollstonecraft's thought often leads him either to distort or to patronize it. He is all in favour of progress -- indeed, he is evangelical about it -- so long as it is understood that progress has now progressed enough. Consequently, the level of his comment on any particular aspect of feminist thought is to say that it either goes too far or not far enough. Thus, he suggests a lack of courage in the Bluestockings whom he sees as examples of "qualified feminism"[19] and, alternately, a lack of femininity in the feminists of his own day who, in his words, are "forgetful alike of [their] task of propagation and education".[20] Mary Wollstonecraft would appear to Bouten to be the ideal balance between these two extremes; however, to make her fit into this mould of domesticated feminist, he is forced to return to the romantic stance described earlier, that is, to ignore aspects of her behavior and to defend others by insisting on the purity of her motives. If Taylor overplays Wollstonecraft's unconventionality, Bouten tones it down, and the haughty genius of the one can scarcely be the same woman as the humble martyr of the other.

However, unlike either Taylor or Rauschenbusch-Clough, Bouten recognizes that female emancipation is inextricably bound up with female education and that to study Mary Wollstonecraft is to study the history of women's education and the traditions of feminism. To this effect, he provides straightforward synopses of the thought of most of the important writers in both France and England on female education from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century, and, if he is limited when discussing Wollstonecraft's feminism, he is less so in presenting information about her predecessors and contemporaries and in demonstrating in what ways she was typical of her age.

Ida B. O'Malley's Women in Subjection is, as its title reveals, a feminist book, and O'Malley's definition of education, like Mary Wollstonecraft's own, a politically-charged one: "the processes to which certain sets of human beings are subjected, in order to make them do and be what those in power think they ought to do and be".[21] Thus, O'Malley's analysis of Wollstonecraft's educational views is considerably different from Taylor's exploration of the romantic mind or Rauschenbusch-Clough's investigation of the formative influences on Wollstonecraft's thought and closer to the approach adopted in Bouten's book. Unlike Bouten, O'Malley makes no attempt to relate the French to the English school of thought, but, like him, she is interested in using Wollstonecraft's feminism as a standard by which to judge the work of her (Wollstonecraft's) contemporaries and the attitudes of her age, and, in this respect, O'Malley's discussion is on the whole superior to Bouten's. Part of this superiority derives from the fact that, while Bouten is too ambivalent about feminism to say anything straightforwardly, O'Malley unequivocally writes from a feminist point of view and betrays no ambivalence whatsoever on the topic. Following Rousseau's assertion that the education of woman should be relative to that of man, O'Malley traces the diversity or conflict of opinion amongst English writers on female education to general acceptance of this rule and the subsequent difficulty of determining what it was that men wanted most. This description of O'Malley's approach suggests that her work (like Bouten's) is likely to be both condescending and anachronistic; surprisingly, it is neither. Her portrait, for example, of Hannah More as a genuinely unconscious feminist whose works, if not her words, vindicated the rights of woman is well-supported and certainly less objectionable than Bouten's similar but more simplistically-argued point that Hannah More was a Wollstonecraft who lacked the courage of her convictions. In general, O'Malley's arguments are not only more straightforward but broader and subtler than Bouten's. Her discussion of educational theorists is complemented by an examination of existing educational institutions (boarding, charity, and Sunday schools, as well as schools of industry) and by an attempt to extract eighteenth-century attitudes towards women's education from the laws, literature, and religion of the day and to use them to build up a picture of the culture as a whole. By and large, O'Malley is successful in this attempt. The comparisons she draws between such diverse types as Hannah More, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Jane Austen are particularly instructive in helping to place Wollstonecraft herself in context. Ultimately, however, Women in Subjection is of limited use to the reader trying to come to grips with Wollstonecraft's thought, simply because the book is not intended to illuminate the development of that thought, but only to use one part of it to help to explain certain aspects of the period as a whole.

The four texts discussed above are the only full-length analyses of Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas in existence, and it is debatable whether or not O'Malley's book should be included in such a list as only one-half of it deals with Wollstonecraft's period, and of that half only twenty-five pages are devoted exclusively to her. Moreover, Taylor's work is closer to biography than to intellectual history and, like Wollstonecraft biographies in general, presents a life that in one way or another is full of exciting incidents and dramatic ups and downs. By comparison the commentary on her ideas in Rauschenbusch-Clough, Bouten, and even in O'Malley seems flat and rather dull. It has been stripped of conflict and presented as the slow and rather meaningless -- because somehow inevitable -- progression of Wollstonecraft's thought to A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, which is seen (as it so often is) as little more than a bursting out of pent up passion and indignation only incidentally informed by rational thought and not at all shaped by conscious control.

Wollstonecraft's ideas have, of course, been discussed in other than full-length book form; indeed, some of the information most useful to Wollstonecraft scholars is to be found in works that are not directly concerned with her. Critical works on William Godwin, Mary Shelley, P.B. Shelley, William Blake, and Henri Fuseli almost always mention her and sometimes comment on her ideas in detail, as do general texts on Romanticism, the French Revolution, feminism, women's education, or the late eighteenth century in general. For example, Wollstonecraft scholarship is indebted to John Knowles whose The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli (1831) published comments from Wollstonecraft's letters to Fuseli and not only added to our knowledge of Fuseli, Wollstonecraft, and the relationship between them, but also increased our understanding of the importance of the French Revolution to Wollstonecraft's relationship with Fuseli and its impact on her thought. Critical work on Godwin usually delineates the effect her philosophy had on his own and speculates about the effect he would have had on her work had she lived. General texts can be useful not only for what they have to say about Wollstonecraft specifically but also because the nature of their task makes it much easier for them to place her in context: J.M.S. Tompkins's The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 (1932), P.J. Miller's "The Education of an English Lady, 1770-1820" (1969), and Ellen Moers's Literary Women (1976) are excellent cases in point.

Recent investigations of Wollstonecraft's ideas have tended to take the form of short essays and annotated re-editions of her work. Carol Poston's editions of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1975) and of Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (1976) and Gary Kelly's edition of Mary and The Wrongs of Woman (1976) document much of Wollstonecraft's reading and help to clarify what Wollstonecraft meant by terms like imagination, mind, desultory, romantic, genius, and sublime. The prefatory essays to these editions, like Janet Todd's introduction to her A Wollstonecraft Anthology (1977) and Eleanor L. Nicholes's commentary on Wollstonecraft in Shelley and his Circle (ed. Kenneth Neill Cameron, I, 1961, 39-66), contain biographical sketches in which the life of the mind is not subordinated to interest in the woman.

While it has been -- and still is -- uncommon to regard Wollstonecraft as an intellectual whose ideas are worthy of serious study, it is still rarer to regard her works as literary or stylistic achievements. Thus, James T. Boulton's The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke (1963) and Gary Kelly's "From vir bonus to Symbolic Dancer: Mary Wollstonecraft's Polemical Style" (1977) -- both of which take Wollstonecraft's ideas seriously and attempt to show that her rhetoric was the result of a conscious experiment to embody her ideas in the style most appropriate to their true meaning -- are amongst the most interesting and important of modern contributions to Wollstonecraft scholarship.

The above review of the literature is not exhaustive; it does, however, represent the different kinds of work that Wollstonecraft scholarship has produced. Without exaggeration, one may say that the bulk of this work has typically concerned itself with vindicating or vilifying the woman, and the result has been a simplification of Wollstonecraft's thought, a simplification which ultimately prepares the way for her to be viewed as an extraordinary woman for the eighteenth century who can, nonetheless, be judged and found wanting by twentieth-century standards. Attempts by modern scholarship to reverse this trend have begun, but cannot yet be said to have succeeded on a very wide scale.

The only general exception to the rule that it is Wollstonecraft's life and not her work that is studied is A Vindication of the Rights of Women. Concentration on A Vindication to the exclusion of her other work has been justified by the fact that it is not only her best but also her most daring and original book. True as this is, when it is taken out of the context of her work as a whole, it is not read as moral philosophy, in which the right of women to be educated is a central issue because of its moral implications for society at large, but usually rather simplistically as a treatise on "women's rights".

Moreover, the whole question of "women's rights" is fraught with preconceptions that are formed at least as much by emotion as reason and derived from the particular and distinctive attitudes of the age. Thus, to the eighteenth century, Mary Wollstonecraft was a "Jacobin" out to subvert the "natural" distinctions of sex and class, and her work was the inevitable (if, for the majority, undesirable) consequence of placing abstract and theoretical above hereditary and traditional rights. To the nineteenth century, she was an immoral woman; her books were generally ignored and her life held up as a warning to other females who might be tempted to stray from the narrow path of virtue. And to the twentieth, she is a rebel (with or without cause), "a feminist who either went too far or not far enough",[22] and her Vindication, a book marred by anger and exaggeration or a polemic undercut by its own apologetic tone.

As prevailing attitudes towards the nature and function of woman shift, so do the grounds on which Wollstonecraft scholarship is based. To some extent this is unavoidable. Whether the biographer, critic, or historian agrees or disagrees with the attitudes of his time, he cannot fail to take them into account, or to be influenced by them.

The twentieth century, then, has its own opinions on the proper sphere of woman and, like every other century, does not regard them as opinions but as facts or truths. The particular nature of these does make it difficult for the modern reader to appreciate the originality of Wollstonecraft's work. Her assertion that sexual equality is a prerequisite to healthy human and political relations has become commonplace and is comfortably acknowledged even by those who have not the slightest idea of what it means, let alone any desire or intention of acting upon it. But there is more to the difficulty than appreciation of originality. Apart from that in Wollstonecraft's work which has become feminist or democratic cliché, there is much that is overlooked, not because it is outdated, but because it is read with what E.P. Thompson has termed "the enormous condescension of posterity".[23]

The tendency to judge the past by present standards and to assume the latter to represent the pinnacle of civilization represents a serious problem in Wollstonecraft scholarship. Exacerbated by the fact that she is viewed almost solely as a feminist and her feminist masterpiece studied in isolation, this tendency has led to misinterpretations of her work. And, this is, perhaps, all the more true -- and certainly more comprehensible -- because it was the re-emergence of feminism in the 1960s as an active social and political issue which provided much of the stimulus for the recent proliferation of work on Wollstonecraft, who is of particular interest at the moment, not only because she was an eighteenth-century woman (and the women's liberation movement has generally stimulated interest in women of the past), but also because she was herself one of the very first feminists and remains one of the most powerful and articulate spokesmen of a movement or ideology that now can see itself as either realizing aims at least two centuries old or as having moved far beyond them in boldness and originality.

While modern work is only rarely guilty of anything so blatant as a deliberate suppression of factual evidence, it is all-too-frequently guilty of complacence or arrogance, of assuming that the twentieth century has progressed far beyond the primitive, if quaint, ideas held about women in the past. The ultimate outcome of the kind of history which begins by assuming the past to be somehow smaller and less real than the present leads, in this case, to the corollary assumption that, therefore, Wollstonecraft's ideas must be littler and simpler than our own. Unconsciously expecting to find this to be true, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and, indeed, is found to be true. Moreover, starting with the notion that the past is somehow inferior to the present seems to lead ironically-enough to judgments based on the even stranger assumption that there is little real difference whatsoever between the two. Thus, after having destroyed much of the real impact of Wollstonecraft's thought by ruthlessly removing it from context, there is nothing left to prevent this simplified version from being examined and judged in the light of its utility for or relevance to twentieth-century needs.

Modern scholarship's righteous condemnation of both the abuse and the extravagant praise Wollstonecraft received at the hands of earlier critics too often stops short of the attempt to understand the past as the past and ends with the extension of a stern but kindly protection to Wollstonecraft's memory -- an attitude which inevitably plays down her intellectual and literary accomplishments, and moreover an attitude that Wollstonecraft's works have not the least need of and which she would have been the first to scorn.

Orientation and Purposes of This Study

The almost unconscious assumptions that have dominated Wollstonecraft scholarship have, as mentioned previously, recently been challenged.

This process of revision has, however, stopped short of reconsidering the importance of Wollstonecraft's early work, and because of this has not yet produced a satisfactory interpretation of the _development_ of her educational philosophy. As Wollstonecraft's views on education are central and basic to her thought as a whole, this is an omission of some import.

The approach of the present study has been designed to bring the work of Bouten, O'Malley, and Rauschenbusch-Clough up to date by filling in some of the gaps and by adjusting the assumptions that make it seem both bland and dated. The texts of these three authors represent the only real attempts to analyze Wollstonecraft's pedagogy in depth, but because they concentrate their analysis on _A Vindication of the Rights of Woman_ they cannot really document, let alone account for, the shifts of emphasis in Wollstonecraft's thought. As well, the approach taken by these texts is too mechanical -- Wollstonecraft's educational philosophy is too complex to be apprehended through a straightforward synopsis of her criticisms of existing practice and her recommendations for a more enlightened system. Valuable as this work is, it needs to be revised in light of recent investigations, so that the development of Wollstonecraft's educational philosophy may be placed and seen within a wider context.

Wollstonecraft's pedagogy is grounded in her early work, and to comprehend the nature of its expression in _A Vindication of the Rights of Woman_ where it is deliberately "radicalized" or "politicized", or to understand its expression in the more lyrical late work, it is first necessary to examine the nature of the experimentation and the intensity of conflict that typify the early work as a period. This study will attempt to begin the process of revising Wollstonecraft scholarship in this area. To do so, it will be necessary to examine Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, Mary, A Fiction, and especially Original Stories (the most complex and subtle of the early works) in their own right by concentrating on textual analysis; to compare these works to one another to see if any conclusions about the pattern of development of the early period as a whole may be drawn on the basis of what textual analysis has revealed; and then, briefly, to consider them in relation to the works that followed them. Wollstonecraft's work will be studied in chronological order. A considerable amount of background detail will be provided in Chapter II, and throughout the thesis as a whole, in an effort to avoid the simplification of Wollstonecraft's thought that inevitably occurs when it is removed from the context of late eighteenth-century pedagogical, literary, and philosophic traditions.

NOTES

[1] In accordance with its desire to promote the reputation of books, rather than critics, The Analytical did not publish signed reviews, although it did in some cases publish initialled ones. Thus, there is a considerable controversy over the exact number of reviews that may reasonably be assumed to have been authored by Mary Wollstonecraft. Ralph Wardle puts the figure at 412, Derek Roper at 204, and Eleanor Flexner questions even this significantly-lowered number -- see appendix D of Eleanor Flexner, Mary Wollstonecraft: A Biography (1972; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973) for a discussion of these varying views. Between 1788 and 1797, slightly over 150 reviews (by my own count) are directly initialled M or W; it is likely that many of the uninitialled reviews directly preceding or following these 150 also issued from Wollstonecraft's pen, but references in this study to Wollstonecraft's work for The Analytical (unless otherwise noted) refer only to the reviews which directly bear her initials. There is, of course, no way to prove that even these were her work, but there is at least no reason to doubt it: that she did write for The Analytical is known, and the signed reviews not only bear her initials, but, at any given time, also a striking similarity in tone, style, and thematic concerns to her original work of the same period.

[2] Wollstonecraft abandoned work on the Campe and Lavater translations when other English translations appeared on the market before her own were completed. Thus, only the last three were in fact published -- the Necker translation in 1788 and the Cambon and Salzmann translations in 1790.

[3] Published in 4 volumes, Posthumous Works also included the unfinished "Letters on the Management of Infants" and "Lessons for Children", "Hints Chiefly Designed to have been Incorporated in the Second Part of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman", "The Cave of Fancy" (which Wollstonecraft began work on in 1787, but abandoned before finishing), "Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation" (written in 1793 but never before published), and the essay "On Poetry and Our Relish for the Beauties of Nature" (previously published in The Monthly Magazine). Posthumous Works printed 16 letters from Wollstonecraft to her publisher, Joseph Johnson, and 77 to her lover Gilbert Imlay. Neither her letters to her family nor those to Godwin himself were included: the former Godwin was denied access to; the latter, for whatever reasons of his own, he withheld, although he did not destroy them, and, in 1966 Wardle overruled his judgment not to publish in a work entitled Godwin and Mary: Letters of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft (Laurence, Kansas: The University of Kansas Press, 1966).

[4] A term suggested to me by Gary Kelly.

[5] "To the Reverend Henry Dyson Gabell", 16 April [1787], Letter 58, Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft, ed. Ralph M. Wardle (Ithaca

and London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 149; hereafter cited as C.L. of M.W.

[6] The work of Janet M. Todd in editing the Mary Wollstonecraft Journal and in compiling Mary Wollstonecraft: An Annotated Bibliography is particularly valuable in an age in which feminist books and articles (which often have something to say about Wollstonecraft) are produced in a quantity that defies individual cataloguing. The C.L. of M.W., the first complete collection of her extant letters, similarly simplifies the task of the critic; before its publication in 1979 biographers relied on a number of widely-scattered sources which had published various Wollstonecraft letters and on the generosity of holders of private collections.

[7] The first edition was published by Joseph Johnson in January 1798; the second, later that same year, after Godwin had revised it to make it somewhat more discreet. The second edition was the basis for the French and German translations and the American publications of 1799 and 1804. It was re-issued in 1927 with additional material appended by the editor, W. Clark Durant, and again the following year, this time edited by John Middleton Murry (London: Constable & Co.); references in this study are to the 1928 edition which follows Godwin's first edition and indicates the changes he made in the second.

[8] The Letters of Horace Walpole, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford: 1905), XV, 131-32 and 337-38, as quoted in Ralph M. Wardle, Mary Wollstonecraft: A Critical Biography (University of Nebraska Press, 1951; rpt. Lincoln: Bison Books, 1966) p. 159, n. 45; Wardle's biography is hereafter cited as Wardle, M.W.

[9] See Wardle, M.W., pp. 316-322.

[10] H.R. James, Preface, Mary Wollstonecraft: A Sketch (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. xiv.

[11] James, Preface, p. xii.

[12] The phrases quoted in this paragraph are all from George Preedy [pseud.], This Shining Woman: Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (London: Collins, 1937), pp. 11-17.

[13] Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham, "Mary Wollstonecraft" in Modern Woman: The Lost Sex (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1947), p. 161.

[14] W. Clark Durant, ed., Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft, by William Godwin (London: Constable & Co., 1927), p. 204.

[15] It is, perhaps, only fair to add here that Wollstonecraft herself would have had little quarrel with this approach; her own work frequently speculates on the purity or impurity of others' motives; in this respect, Wollstonecraft was true to her belief in certain tenets central to the moral philosophy of men like Richard Price (which will be discussed later). Wollstonecraft was, however, primarily a moralist and a polemicist, and for the literary historian or critic to unreservedly adopt her belief in what might be called motivational analysis is, I think, to follow in her footsteps too closely.

[16] Susan Sontag, "Psychoanalysis and Norman O. Brown's Life Against Death", in Against Interpretation: And Other Essays (1966; rpt. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Laurel Edition, 1969), p. 264.

[17] Muriel Spark, Child of Light: A Reassessment of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (Essex: Tower Bridge Publications, 1951), p. 10; the exact words are Spark's, but the notion is common, and similar phrases can be found in most critical discussions of Wollstonecraft.

[18] G.R. Stirling Taylor, Mary Wollstonecraft: A Study in Economics and Romance (London: Martin Secker, 1911), pp. 85-86.

[19] Jacob Bouten, Mary Wollstonecraft and The Beginnings of Female Emancipation in France and England (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1922), p. 10; see also p. 8.

[20] Bouten, p. 8.

[21] Ida B. O'Malley, Women in Subjection: A Study of the Lives of Englishwomen before 1832 (London: Duckworth, The Camelot Press, 1933), p. 91.

[22] Emily W. Sunstein, A Different Face: The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 354.

[23] E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: 1973), p. 12, as quoted in Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 10.

CHAPTER II

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT: THE WOMAN AND HER WORLD

Eighteenth-Century Women: Rules and Exceptions

That biology was destiny -- and women, by their nature, intellectually inferior to men and fated to play out their lives in an almost exclusively domestic realm -- was, to the eighteenth century at large, unarguable. It was a given, a truth assumed so unselfconsciously that there was little fuss made over occasional exceptions to the rule. Women who rejected their roles as wives and mothers in favour of intellectual pursuits, or who tried to combine the two, were sometimes patronized or pitied, sometimes envied and admired, but they were not, either individually or collectively, regarded as challenges to the established order. By 1800 Englishmen would no longer be able to assume this attitude with unselfconscious assurance and ease, and the work of Mary Wollstonecraft and its association with French revolutionary principles and hated English Jacobinism would be instrumental in effecting the change. But the transformation of cultural attitudes which would lead to polarization -- to the nineteenth-century's women's movement, on the one hand, and to its narrow definition of femininity and the cult of woman on the other -- developed out of the eighteenth century's tolerance for "exceptions" and the traditions and conventions that began to establish themselves as the number of "exceptions" began to multiply.

The latter half of the eighteenth century produced an unprecedented number of women writers, who, on the whole, were given a gentlemanly reception by the world of letters. Speculations on the nature of feminine sensibility and the enriching contributions it could make to literature became common. The suggestion that the particular bent of woman's nature -- its imagination, fancy, and emotional insight -- might have more than domestic value had the effect, though possibly not the intention, of encouraging yet more women to try their hand at literature, and the sex began to write and to publish (anonymously, at first) with a fervour and a seriousness that were entirely new:

> That a woman should write was not new; there had always been single spies; but soon after the middle of the century the battalions advance, and before a generation is over, women of all ranks are writing, from the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Craven down to the Bristol milkwoman and a farmer's daughter of Gloucestershire. Dr. Johnson commented on the change; in his youth, he said, the woman who could spell an ordinary letter had been considered all-accomplished, but now "they vied with the men in everything."[1]

J.M.S. Tompkins's analysis of this change specifies the improvement of women's education and the development of the popular novel as major contributing factors in the rise of women to professional literary status. Education, the novel, and female literary professionalism were linked in a loose kind of cause and effect relationship that was, of course, affected by other things and ultimately rooted in the rise of the middle class.

Girls had always been the property of their fathers, but the growing numbers, prosperity, and influence of the English middle class between 1750 and 1820 and the corresponding possibility of class mobility conferred a new value on that property and, consequently, made the behavior and education of daughters more important. In the first place, the education of women was a self-evident luxury and therefore a means of declaring wealth, a status symbol; in the second, it was an investment, as the declaration of wealth advanced the chances of increasing family status still further by attracting an upper-class suitor or husband for the daughter. Educating women for marriage was, however, not merely an ornament or an investment, but a necessity: middle-class women who did not marry had few alternatives open to them, since working for money (even when it was possible to support oneself on the pittance earned) involved a loss of newly-acquired status, and thus the spinster who was not willing to remain an economic drain on her family became a disgrace to it.

Marriage, then, was still (perhaps more than ever) the one truly respectable career for a woman, but as it became less and less necessary for middle-class women to contribute to the economy of the family and as even lower-middle-class families now had servants to take charge of household chores, wives had to take on new functions. Hence, the development of the "education of accomplishments" -- an education whose self-perceived task was to transform the middle-class female into a "lady". Modelled on middle-class notions of aristocratic life and values and promising "the prestige and allurement of the purely ornamental",[2] it quickly established itself as the dominant form of education for middle-class women. To translate its promises into actualities, it concentrated on teaching the wide variety of social skills and knowledge which the middle class felt separated them from their superiors: young girls were given lessons in dancing, painting, needlework, and music, a smattering of foreign languages to enable them to carry on drawing-room conversation, and a superficial acquaintance with literature and history so that they might prove to be entertaining companions to men of culture. In short, the education of accomplishments sought to improve its clients' standing on the marriage market, and, anticipating success, educated middle-class girls for leisure, luxury, and dependence.

Daughters, not unreasonably, began by adopting their fathers' aspirations for them, but their education, superficial as it seemed to its critics, often supplied them with tastes and aspirations of their own, just as literacy and leisure often led to results not wholly compatible with dependence. As the Critical Review remarked in 1771, it had become "no less necessary for a lady to unbend her mind than to unlace her stays";[3] Englishwomen became, first, readers, constituting some "three-quarters of the novel-reading public",[4] and then, in increasing numbers, writers, responsible for well over half of the epistolary and domestic novels published between 1770 and 1800.[5] Whether one accepts Tompkins's claim that the entry of women into the field helped "to debase" the novel "into a form of female recreation"[6] or Ellen Moers's assertion that "the written word in its most memorable form, starting in the eighteenth century, became increasingly and steadily the work of women",[7] the fact remains that women were writing in quantities hitherto unheard of.

Beginning with the novel -- which was seen by writers and critics alike as the least exacting of literary forms -- women had by the 1790s insinuated themselves into almost every branch of writing, from educational tracts to history, poetry, drama, religion, and even politics. For women in particular, writing had, in Tompkins's words, come to offer "an outlet to the imaginative, an instrument to the didactic and a resource to the straitened".[8] Had it paid better, it would also have come dangerously close to offering a viable alternative to marriage for any woman with a modicum of talent and a taste for "respectable" independence.

As it was, authorship did in fact become an alternate way of life for a handful of women (of whom Wollstonecraft was one), but the majority of female writers were neither looking for nor forced into anything quite so drastic as trying to support themselves solely by their writings. Their entry into literature did however produce changes in how both women and literature were regarded -- changes which did not go unnoticed at the time. Indeed, the period as a whole was characterized by a lively debate on the proper sphere of woman and the proper education to fit her for that sphere.[9] Up until 1800, when the debate became acrimonious instead of merely lively, female authorship was well tolerated. It was expected that women writers would neither take themselves too seriously nor neglect the more essential duties of womanhood -- or, in other words, that they would remain ladylike. And in this respect, female authors gave little offence. If the act of writing was in itself suspicious (or should have been given the view of womanhood prevalent at the time), the books these women wrote and the characters, especially the female characters, they created were apt to set suspicion at rest, for, to an even greater degree than male writers, they upheld conventional notions of feminine propriety, delicacy, and morality in their work.

The popular novel and the education of accomplishments, however, had more in common than their roots in the rise of the middle class and their contribution to the advancement of a body of literature written more or less for women, by women. For one, they were both severely criticized and on the same grounds. Paradoxically, critics reconciled themselves to the writing of feminine novels, but not to the reading of them -- that is, while they applauded the exquisite sensibility displayed in women's work and commended its good intentions, they simultaneously worried that the lack of the masculine qualities of judgment and intellect must lead to overly sentimental pictures of life and were none too sure that the novels themselves were not a dangerous influence on the young. The education of accomplishments came in for much the same kind of criticism: it was, according to its critics, superficial, frivolous, and, because it encouraged false expectations and failed to teach a proper resignation to the facts of life, subversive of morality; predictably, there was less consensus among intellectuals as to what exactly should replace it.[10] However, such critical judgments did little to discourage the common appetite for either novels or accomplishments and more often than not probably whetted it.

Intellectuals, however discontented they may have been with the stuff of popular novels or the accomplishments that passed for education, usually stopped short of attacking the particular picture of womanhood which the novels portrayed and the accomplishments sought to embody in real life. From the fiction, non-fiction, and even the criticism of the day, the eighteenth century's portrait of a lady emerges clearly: she is a submissive, modest, chaste, fragile beauty who is tyrannized by the very power of her emotions and her own susceptibility to them. To be feminine was to be emotional, to feel things intensely, and, in her sense of delicacy and in her ability to feel, woman was the superior of man. But virtue was to the eighteenth century a question of, and for, reason, and to be virtuous a woman needed recourse to masculine judgment and intellect. Thus, the ideal woman relied heavily on the men in her life -- her father, husband, brother, or guardian -- and was anxious to submit herself to their guidance. Another reason for the importance of a suitable marriage thus emerges -- it was vital that a woman have access to a male opinion that was trustworthy and in her own interests as a mere lover's or friend's obviously could not be. A prudent marriage not only conferred some importance in the world upon a woman and gave her a chance for happiness, it was also the only way in which she could ensure her safety and guarantee her virtue, protect herself not only against external temptation but also from internal susceptibility to her own dangerously tender-hearted emotions. Within the home a woman could be any number of things, and her position nominally and normally provided her with a certain kind of authority and power; outside the home, as an independent force apart from male guidance and dominance, her virtue was immediately suspect. The relationship between a man and a woman was necessarily characterized by her need for protection and guidance and his ability to provide them. To the eighteenth century, the resulting pattern of dominant-submissive behavior could not be seen as degrading to either sex; on the contrary, it expressed the law of nature and the will of God, and to reject either one's prerogative to command or one's obligation to obey was little short of sacrilege.

This ideal woman was, of course, a creature of fiction and dreams, but like all cultural myths, she was expressive not only of a longing for perfection but also of a metaphorical understanding of the real nature of things. That it was possible to simultaneously hold and reject this notion of ultimate femininity is clear not only in the private letters and diaries of the day, but also in its literature, and most specifically in its women's literature. Women writers created scores of these heroines and took great pains to emphasize their beautiful passivity, their self-sacrificing obedience; but the act of creating women who upheld the cultural myth was undercut in these works by many things, the simplest being that they were themselves written by women. The act of writing is by its nature both egotistical and willful -- one cannot write with one's father's, husband's, or brother's mind -- and women writers knew, perhaps better than anyone else, that when they made their work public and claimed attention for their own thoughts, they were breaking an unwritten rule, and one central to the myth's survival. The inherent contradiction between the ideal woman and the publishing woman was reconciled temporarily by a tacit agreement to regard the former as typical and the latter as atypical of woman's true nature: women writers were exceptions to the rule, and they themselves strove to make this clear in their work by recommending obedience, resignation, religion, and marriage to their female readers; whether or not they had chosen these things for themselves was another matter altogether, and one which they did not believe need interfere with their general subscription to cultural myth.

The temporary alliance between fact and fiction, or reality and myth, left women writers in the rather enviable position of being able to enjoy the best of both worlds; they had managed to claim masculine prerogatives for themselves without being forced to renounce the special, and often very powerful, status that their femininity granted them. Until 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft was one of these women, but with the publication of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman she became truly exceptional -- an exception even among exceptions -- by claiming that intellect might well be as much a part of typical female nature as it was of her own. If it was not a totally unprecedented argument, it was presented in totally new terms and with an "unholy" vehemence; coming from a man, it would have been intolerable; coming from a woman, it was heresy; and coming in conjunction with revolutionary principles in general, it was dangerous and effectively brought the privileged position women writers had occupied -- and the Reign of Tolerance -- to an end.

What makes Mary Wollstonecraft unusual in the eighteenth century is not simply that she challenged the century's view of feminine nature, and thus its way of making social and moral sense of its world, but the manner in which she came to do so and the means by which she did it. The key difference between Wollstonecraft's early and late work, or between her work and that of her female contemporaries, is less what was believed than how it was expressed; it was, in other words, as much a question of explicitness as of degree. Thus, to assert that Wollstonecraft at once shared and rejected the orthodox beliefs of her society, and the conventions of the female tradition that those beliefs had helped to form, is neither as paradoxical nor as confusing as it might at first appear. In the first place, eighteenth-century women writers were not as straightforwardly conventional as they were seen to be then or are believed to have been now. And in the second, if Wollstonecraft did not reject the traditions established by other women writers, she did modify them to suit her own needs -- and in so doing, she changed or expanded the tradition as a whole.

The belief that woman's emotional nature made her in some respects the moral superior of man appears to have been taken seriously by a few men (most notably Rousseau) and almost all women, or at least almost all women writers. And in this Wollstonecraft was no exception; she concerned herself with "vindicating the honour of women in general"[11] or with proving the importance of "good" women to society as a whole, and like many another woman, she may be said to have taken her "function of ennobling men very seriously"[12] indeed. Nor was she ever to give it up. Nonetheless, to reconcile the moral superiority of woman with the notion that it was imperative that she should unquestioningly obey the commands of male reason, even in matters of conscience, required an intellect of considerable dexterity, and the contradictory nature of the expectations that women writers had to deal with when they were creating female characters may help to explain why they (that is, the writers)

> were not, with the amazing exception of Jane Austen, primarily realists, though much that is real may be found in their works. They were moralists, satirists and dreamers. In their hands the novel was not so much a reflection of life as a counterpoise to it, within the covers of which they looked for compensation, for ideal pleasures and ideal revenge. To say that the foundations of the woman's novel are laid in malice and in day-dream is, of course, to exaggerate; pages of quiet veracity spring to mind and contest the assertion; but it is the exaggeration of a truth, and so far useful that it connects the domestic sentimental novel of the 'seventies with the Gothic romance of the 'nineties and shows them to be the products of the same mental soil.[13]

While Wollstonecraft remained a satirist, a moralist, and a dreamer to the end, she also became more and more of a realist, and it was her attempt to reconcile the female tradition with realism that brought her face to face with some of the contradictions inherent in women's writing. Partly by stating what other women writers only implied and partly by making certain contradictions in the female tradition clear, Wollstonecraft radicalized and transformed the original tradition. After her Rights of Woman women's literature could never again be viewed in the same light, not only because Wollstonecraft's book had changed the way of looking at old issues but also because it had provided a basis for comparison which made it clear to what degree that change had preceded her own work and thus revealed the degree to which "exceptions", despite their apparent conformity, were helping to undermine their century's basic beliefs:

> ... Mary Wollstonecraft was not the only, just the most brilliant of the turn-of-the-century feminists in England, America, and on the Continent.
>
> Wollstonecraft's radicalism, however, makes only one end of the spectrum of opinion that colors the writings of the self-conscious women of her day. In the 1780s, 1790s, and 1800s, feminism touched them all, from those who supported to those who opposed its doctrines, with all the range of possible attitudes (including apparent indifference to controversy) that lie between: the elitism of

> Mme de Staël, the Evangelicalism of Hannah More, the conservatism of Maria Edgeworth, the cautious prudery of Fanny Burney, the pedagogical hauteur of Mme de Genlis, the Americanism of Susanna Rowson, the escapism of Mrs. Radcliffe, the irony of Jane Austen.
>
> Hannah More, who was called the She-Bishop in petticoats, pronounced herself "invincibly resolved" never even to read Wollstonecraft's Vindication, because she herself strongly favored female "subordination"; and Miss More wrote her Coelebs in Search of a Wife to correct Mme de Staël's dangerous ideas about the woman of genius. But Mme de Staël recognized a fellow spirit when she gave Coelebs one of the best reviews it received, in Le Constitutionnel; and the clever and spirited Mary Berry, whose journals and letters reflect the ideal female reader of the period, found it "amazing" how close Hannah More came in her views on female education to those of Mary Wollstonecraft. "H. More will, I dare say, be very angry when she hears this," chuckled Miss Berry.[14]

To assert that Wollstonecraft's ideas evolved out of and belonged to the traditions and beliefs of her day is not, however, to deny either the originality or the radicalism of her thought. She said things few had dared to even think, and she said them in a way no one -- and certainly no woman -- had ever done before. What she had in common with her contemporaries may be clear enough in retrospect, but to her century she seemed a creature apart, not only because of her espousal of radical ideas but because of the masculine directness with which she expressed them. To the eighteenth century, intellectual arrogance and true womanliness were incompatible characteristics; if pride was a venial sin in a man, it was mortal in a woman, and while an authoress may have been an exception to more general rules, she was no more to consider herself above this Divine Ruling than was any other woman:

> Let a woman write to amuse her leisure hours, to instruct her sex, to provide blameless reading for the young, or to boil the pot; moral zeal was an acceptable justification and poverty an accepted excuse; but there was one motive which could neither be justified or excused -- ambition, the "boast" of

> conscious power, craving to perform its task and receive its reward. The proper attitude for a female talent was diffidence; the proper field for its exercise, the narrow circle of her intimate friends; and if for any of the permitted reasons she stepped outside the circle, let her at least sedulously avoid the disgraceful imputation of assurance.[15]

Far from being a humble woman, Wollstonecraft was an arrogant and ambitious one, and if she could hardly have been unusual in this, she lacked, to a degree most others did not, the ability to disguise her true feelings to herself or to anyone else. Even her very earliest works lack "proper" modesty and reveal a woman who, despite the fact that she is not saying anything too objectionable, is, nonetheless, speaking her mind because she has _assumed_ the value of what she has to say -- a woman, in other words, who implicitly believes in the value of her own mind and seldom resorts to subterfuge to keep it from showing. She was of course in these early works addressing other women, and to some degree that justified her arrogant tone; one of the reasons the _Vindications_ were so startling and so generally unacceptable was that they dared to address men in the same tone and do it not only without self-deprecation, be it real or false, but also without apology. Wollstonecraft wrote because she needed money and she needed an outlet for her moral concerns -- acceptable reasons; but she also wrote because she delighted in the act of composition, in testing the power and strength of her own mind, and again if she could hardly have been unusual in this, she did not make much of a secret of it, and it was obvious right from the beginning of her career that it was only to be a question of time before she made, in one way or another, a public confession of the secret vice of feminine authorship -- pride. In a letter to Joseph Johnson, written in 1787 when she was still unknown and ostensibly either asking or thanking him for his help, she announced her intention of achieving complete and total independence through authorship thus:

> I am determined!--Your sex generally laugh at female determinations; but let me tell you, I never yet resolved to do, any thing of consequence, that I did not adhere resolutely to it, till I had accomplished my purpose, improbable as it might have appeared to a more timid mind.[16]

Wollstonecraft achieved through authorship not only what she had desired, but more than she had ever dared dream of and in the process realized another of her goals (hinted at in the above letter)--no one was ever to accuse her of timidity. Both intellectually and personally, when she erred, it was on the side of boldness, not prudence. It is little wonder that in a society in which prudence was both a woman's safety and her cardinal virtue and in which a "proud and arrogant woman was, almost by definition, an unnatural, unprincipled creature, who had refused to accept the limitations of her own nature" Mary Wollstonecraft could not for long be tolerated and came to be seen as "a monster who threatened the whole 'providentially' arranged framework of society".[17]

What must surprise the modern reader is less the woman's arrogance than the fact that her almost unreasonable self-assurance now appears to have been justified. Without the belief in her mind--and it should be noted that it was not simply belief in herself, which would have been far less rare, but specifically a belief in the powers of her intellect--Wollstonecraft's career could not have followed the path it did in the eighteenth century, although it well might have done in the twentieth. Quite apart from the strength of her intellect was the courage, the arrogance, the ambition, the whatever that enabled her not only to develop her mind but to make that development public. The works of her mind can be analyzed on their own and their importance can be evaluated in strictly academic terms, but the real nature of Wollstonecraft's accomplishment, the degree to which it represents an original mind triumphing over both personal and cultural restraints and insisting upon turning liabilities into strengths through the sheer power of the intellect, requires some understanding of the forces that shaped not only the lives of eighteenth-century women in general but also of the particular influences and experiences that helped to make Wollstonecraft who she was.

Mary Wollstonecraft's Early Life (1759 - 1789)

> Reason had governed my conduct, but could not
> change my nature
> --Mary Wollstonecraft, "Cave of Fancy"

The idea of the child as father of the man is, in Mary Wollstonecraft's case, more than a pedagogical or psychoanalytical truism, more than something the critic uses or "reads in" to explain facts or situations which would otherwise be inexplicable. Not only does an understanding of Wollstonecraft's life depend upon knowledge of the kind of childhood she endured, but an understanding of her work requires recognition of the importance she herself placed on her childhood experiences and the degree to which she dedicated her work to documenting the ways in which early environment shaped the human mind in general. Wollstonecraft's prose is personal and self-revealing, her plots recount and parallel (with slight variations) situations in her own life, the heroines of her novels are named Mary and Maria--these were not accidents, any more than they were the result of neurotic compulsion or a simple lack of imagination. Her constant re-writing and re-ordering of past issues attests to her fascination with the principle of determinism, a fascination which resulted not only in self-conscious attempts to analyze and therefore exorcize her own history but also in broader educational experiments designed to liberate all mankind from the chains of the past.

To assume that every word Wollstonecraft ever wrote was ultimately about herself and that, therefore, there must be a direct correlation between her and her characters, or between biographical and literary interpretation, would be to reduce useful generalization to pedantic absurdity--an absurdity which has already been too frequently committed in Wollstonecraft scholarship. Wollstonecraft did write about herself, did structure and re-structure her own feelings and thoughts to demonstrate or to exemplify what she had come to see as general truth about the ways in which childhood experiences determined adult patterns of thought and behavior. But because her work sought to embody general not particular truth, the connection between her life and her writings does not lie in the "facts" she related (where she may or may not have been true to her own experience) but in the ideas or the purposes--the philosophical structure--underlying the disclosures she made. The belief that the past influenced the present in real and immediate ways could, of course, have been either the cause or the effect of her lifelong interest in her own past in particular and in education in general, but in either case it helps to explain her proclivity to self-analysis and her commitment to education. Thus, any attempt to explain the development of her thought must take into account that at least in her own eyes her work proceeded out of and demonstrated an individuality that was the result of a traumatic childhood upon an active and analytical intelligence intent on making general sense out of its own particular experience.

Mary Wollstonecraft, the second of seven children and the first daughter of Elizabeth Dickson and Edward John Wollstonecraft, was born on 27 April 1759.[18] Her paternal grandfather had been a master weaver turned successful businessman, and when he died in 1765 he left a considerable fortune (some £10,000) to his son, Edward John. The younger Wollstonecraft had, by all accounts, been trained for his father's trade, but disliked it and determined to use his inheritance to move up the social ladder by becoming a gentleman farmer. His attempt to raise himself and his family to a new social position was ultimately doomed to failure. As the years passed, and one after the other of his ventures floundered, and he abandoned them to start over again in some new part of the country, that failure became more and more apparent.

The Wollstonecrafts' desire to cut their associations with trade seems to the twentieth-century reader a curiously determined one: the children do not seem to have been informed of their social background; the eldest son was to be a lawyer; the daughters were not expected to have to support themselves and were not trained to do so; and even in the face of destitution and poverty, neither parents nor offspring seriously considered returning to trade as an alternative to impending disaster. The Wollstonecrafts had joined the middle orders--whether or not they could realistically afford middle-class expectations, they had adopted the values and attitudes that made them mandatory.

Portraits of Wollstonecraft family life tend to be drawn from and to correspond to the picture painted by Wollstonecraft herself: a drunken, spendthrift, father; a passive, resigned, mother; a preferred elder son and a neglected daughter. Wollstonecraft's biographers recount the stories of Elizabeth Wollstonecraft's aloof indifference, Edward Wollstonecraft's drunken rages, the attempts on the part of the daughter Mary to protect her mother from her father's violence, and the child's unstated disappointment that even her willingness to take the beatings intended for her mother could not win her either Elizabeth's love or approval. From the moment Wollstonecraft put her thoughts down on paper, what she complained about was not being loved, not being first in anyone's affections. At fifteen she wrote to a friend with whom she had quarrelled: "I am a little singular in my thoughts of love and friendship; I must have the first place or none";[19] the line is but an echo of her resentment (expressed directly, if less eloquently, elsewhere) that not only had her parents preferred Ned (her elder brother, Edward) over her from the beginning, favoured him at her expense, and continued to do so, but also of her conviction that they had done so unjustly, and that she, therefore, had been denied something that was her due right. Claire Tomalin argues that a "sense of grievance may have been her most important endowment";[20] clearly, it was one of the more important ones. The authority that a child is compelled to submit to is usually (or so we prefer to believe) tempered by love and a genuine concern for the child's welfare. If this was in fact true of the authority wielded by Wollstonecraft's parents, she for one did not believe it. She felt her mother had been cold and overly harsh towards her, and, much as she tried to believe in her father's sporadic bouts of affection, her ability to do so was undermined by his brutal displays of drunken temper which grew increasingly frequent as his fortune, and the prospects it had represented, dwindled, and the gradual slide into poverty accelerated.

Mary Wollstonecraft's childhood, then, was far from idyllic. As to how this background affected her adult character and her career, there is, predictably, less consensus. Early biographers, of whom Taylor is in this case representative, tend to see poverty as the major force in Wollstonecraft's family and in her own life:

> Whether she had ever written the Vindication of Woman, if there had not been this poverty, is one of those questions which arise in most lives. Would Carlyle without dyspepsia have written as he did? Or Napoleon fought so well without epilepsy? And so on, and so on. But, apparently, Mr. Wollstonecraft determined to take no risks about the great book being written; he scattered his money in a senseless manner; and his daughter Mary, with the rest of the family, found that work was not a virtue but a necessity.[21]

Poverty was certainly a major force in Wollstonecraft's life, but her father's influence on her was not, as Taylor suggests, restricted to the state of poverty that his foolishness created, any more than her response to him (as Taylor goes on to imply) was one of simple and utter contempt. Edward Wollstonecraft was not merely a fool, and he was not poor simply because of his own ineptitude; while he hardly possessed his own father's flair for business or management, and his temperament was, by all accounts, more inclined to pleasure and extravagance than to serious application to work of any kind, his financial collapse was only partly due to his pretending to be the gentleman to the extent of neglecting the farming. Farming was a risky business at best, and the agricultural and economic changes of the years of his attempts to make a go of it made the risk considerably greater yet. It is in fact even possible that Edward Wollstonecraft's failure was due to the very characteristic which would eventually make his eldest daughter a success--refusal, despite the odds or setbacks, to give up, to go back to trade, or to settle for any thing less than he had determined to have. Moreover, the Wollstonecrafts did not start out poor (far from it), and it took some years for them to end up that way, years in which Edward Wollstonecraft's extravagance and indulgent affection must have made him appear a rather dashing and romantic figure. Sunstein argues that Mary Wollstonecraft was in fact very close to her father for many years and that his influence on her was both profound and complex, "such a father", she says, "is dangerous, confusing--and unforgettable".[22]

Like most intellectuals, Wollstonecraft believed that to understand was, at least in some measure, to be free, but, beginning with her family and continuing throughout her life, she was all too often faced with her own inability to reconcile emotion with reason:

> Perhaps a delicate mind is not susceptible of a greater misery, putting guilt out of the question, than what must arise from the consciousness of loving a person whom their reason does not approve.[23]

Written in 1786, this statement encompasses, if not the facts, at least the emotional ambiance of Wollstonecraft's early life as she saw it: love and life did not make much sense, refusing as they did to conform to the intellectual patterns that promised to simplify and control them. Her father may have been a brutal man, but he was also her only source of love, and while her mother was cold and harsh, she was also reliable, predictable, and respectable. The child's need for love drew her to her father; her need for safety, to her mother; she could force herself to forgive her father's debauches, but she could not forget them or what they meant; she could respect but not love her mother whose coldness constantly left her feeling rejected and humiliated in a way her father's violence did not; she could love one and approve of the other, but she could do both with neither. It is likely that Wollstonecraft early determined not to be like either one of them and feared and, to the best of her ability, repressed those elements in her character which she perceived to be like those of either of her parents. It is clear that she felt unloved and that recognizing and acknowledging her need for a love that was not forthcoming left her prey to emotions that ranged from fear and despair to guilt and anger. These feelings were not compatible with the way in which she desired to see either her family or herself; consequently, she early began the design of strategies which would allow her to rationalize and sublimate them into a more acceptable form. Such strategies are, of course, commonplace, but Mary Wollstonecraft's attempts to resolve psychological conflict were as often self-conscious as unconscious and led to a series of experiments which justify the conclusion that for Wollstonecraft, painful though it may have been, the tension between emotion and reason was by and large a creative one.

The turbulence and insecurity of Wollstonecraft's childhood contributed to her need for certainty, a need which was to have painful consequences in her relationships with other people, but productive ones in her career, for, paradoxically, it was her very need for certainty that made her intellect so flexible, so open to new ideas, and so willing to revise her own (and everybody else's) opinions, over and over again, in the attempt to make them yield the answers she was looking for.

Her family background also influenced her in other ways. Believing, as she did, that she was unloved and undervalued by her parents had at least four discernible effects on the development of her character and thus of her career:

> (1) it stimulated her desire to prove herself worthy and thus awakened the ambition and determination which seem so foreign to the typical eighteenth-century woman

(2) it caused her to look for support and affection outside the boundaries of her family, thus undermining familial or parental authority, contributing to her spirit of independence, and leaving her freer than most women of her century to form her own friendships and make her own decisions, but also leaving her carrying the full burden and responsibility of her choices

(3) it led her to adopt particularly intense religious views (largely of her own creation, but not, on the whole, unorthodox), which not only offered consolation and an explanation for her misery, and allowed her to translate self-sacrifice into duty and anger into moral zeal, but also strengthened her habit of introspection and self analysis

(4) it helped to fashion her propensity to rely on her own opinion and to express her anger at any attempt to silence her in tones of the strongest contempt, a technique which, surprisingly enough, gained her immediate respect and influence within her family and which was later to be shaped into a powerful rhetorical device.

If Wollstonecraft's ambition, determination, and independence, as well as her religious views, her introspective mind, and her sharp tongue, did not result from childhood trauma, they were certainly strengthened and reinforced by it. Her family inadvertently prepared her to rely on herself as most eighteenth-century women were not expected to do and also contributed to much of her genuine moral zeal and her passion for reform, for nothing she was to see in the way of family life did anything to convince her that her own experience had been atypical. Most parents were, in her opinion, like her own--weak-minded and either tyrannical or indifferent as far as their children were concerned. Even Wollstonecraft's early work, which does not go as far as to suggest actual state intervention in education and child-rearing practices, makes it clear that if children were to be reared into healthy, happy adults something more than parental guidance and discretion would be required. Contempt for the typical eighteenth-century parent is not only the strongest feature of Wollstonecraft's pedagogy but the part of it that provided the stimulus for innovation in her work.

If the circumstances of Wollstonecraft's early life helped to shape the personality and mind revealed in her work, they also (as Taylor's emphasis upon Wollstonecraft poverty insists) influenced the development of her career in more direct and tangible ways. A middle-class family who had lost its income faced social and economic realities which were, to say the least, grim. This was particularly true of the middle-class woman whose marriage marketability decreased sharply with the loss of her fortune; thus, a woman who had been educated for accomplished leisure could suddenly find herself not only without a husband but without any other visible means of support. Given such a predicament, a lady who did not wish to forgo her class pretensions altogether or to resign her respectability had only three options: she could become a paid companion, a teacher, or a governess. Mary Wollstonecraft, who had not only to support herself but also to contribute to the support of her family, was to be a companion, a teacher, and a governess before she was a professional writer, and throughout her adult life poverty and debt would remain underlying and almost constant sources of anxiety.

In the attempt to avoid his failure, or maybe because of a simple wanderlust, Edward Wollstonecraft moved his family about a great deal: from London to Epping Forest in 1765; to Beverley in Yorkshire in 1768; from Beverley to Hoxton, a suburb of London, in 1774; from there to Wales in 1776; and back to another suburb of London, Walworth, in 1777.

By 1774, shortly before they were to leave Yorkshire, where Wollstonecraft spent the happiest years of her childhood, the Wollstonecrafts' period of relative social and economic stability was coming to a close. For most of their six years in Beverley, the family appears to have enjoyed a life appropriate to the lower gentry. Mary Wollstonecraft's older brother went to grammar school while she herself attended day school, made friends (principally with a girl named Jane Arden with whom she exchanged the letters that provide most of the information on this period of Wollstonecraft's life), and took childish delight in exploring the countryside. By 1774, however, Edward Wollstonecraft's "violent temper and extravagant turn of mind"[24] (as his eldest daughter phrased it in a letter to Jane Arden) had made him the subject of local gossip, and from 1774 to the end of his life his intemperance, irresponsibility, and impatience were to steadily increase. Mary Wollstonecraft's friendships with the Clares and with the Bloods made her life somewhat easier, but she opposed her father's moving of the family to Wales, and by 1777, even though she was now back in England close to her friends, she had come to find her situation at home intolerable.[25] She threatened to leave, only to be dissuaded by her mother's tearful entreaties. A year later, however, she applied for, received, and accepted a position as a companion to a Mrs. Dawson of Bath. At nineteen she left home--against her parents' will and despite their resentment.

Wollstonecraft's sensitivity and pride bridled at the dependence inherent in her position and the subservience it demanded, but she evidently determined to make the best of the situation, and, for the two years that she remained a companion to Mrs. Dawson, make the best of it she did. Wollstonecraft's letters from this period alternate between a youthful gaiety and an anxious concern for the future which she tried to subdue by instructing herself to submit to the will of God. These letters strike Wardle as self-dramatizing, and he suggests that Wollstonecraft had at least for the moment adopted the very fashionable "pose of a woman of sensibility".[26] There may be some truth to the argument that Wollstonecraft was playing, as nineteen-year-olds will, at being a "sentimental heroine"[27] overcome by suffering, but these letters also reveal a precocious maturity and, for a very young woman, strikingly keen powers of observation and self-analysis. Wollstonecraft's letters to her old friend Jane Arden are somewhat edgy or defensive (after all, Jane Arden had grown up in Beverley and knew the talk about Wollstonecraft's father), but there is much in them that supports Wollstonecraft's own interpretation of her character--she was, in her own opinion, older than her years and growing old before her time, and she found it difficult to resign herself to what she saw as her fate.

Life with Mrs. Dawson was not, however, without its compensations. Wollstonecraft enjoyed her new surroundings, and there is some evidence to support the conjecture that she indulged in a flirtation with one Joshua Waterhouse, although not enough is known about this period of her life to speculate on whether or not she was seriously disappointed when his attentions went elsewhere.[28] Bath itself must have been an education of sorts for her, although like any sensible girl not in a position to partake of its pleasures she affected a healthy and hearty disdain for them. Her loneliness and isolation were, nonetheless, painfully real, as was her despondency at the prospect of spending the rest of her life as a dependent subject to the whims and dictates of another, and she drew consolation less from new-found pleasures than from her religion, from the notion that she was fulfilling her duty, and from the fact that she had escaped the turmoil and conflict of her home.

Bath, however, turned out to be not an escape but a temporary respite from her troubled home life: sometime in 1780, she was called home to nurse her dying mother. Wollstonecraft's relationship with her family had deteriorated--they resented her independence and she resented their resentment--but she could hardly ignore such an obvious call to duty. In April 1782, after a painful and lingering illness, Elizabeth Wollstonecraft died. For all her faults, she had held her family together and without her it distintegrated. Ned (by then a lawyer in London with a family of his own) somewhat reluctantly agreed to take the younger Wollstonecraft girls, Everina and Eliza, into his household; Eliza, shortly thereafter, married, while Everina, the youngest of the girls, stayed on to help keep house for her elder brother. James went to sea while Edward Wollstonecraft took Charles (the youngest), himself, and his mistress (formerly, according to some accounts, the housekeeper; later, the second Mrs. Wollstonecraft) back to Wales and Mary went to live with the Bloods in Walham Green. Edward Wollstonecraft, who was by this time more or less destitute and relying on Ned to manage his affairs, seems to have simply abandoned his parental role, and no one--least of all Mary--expected him to revive it. Mary Wollstonecraft was never to see her father again, although she would contribute to his financial support--as to Eliza's, Everina's, James's and Charles's--for the rest of her life.

Six years prior to her mother's death, Mary Wollstonecraft had met the Bloods and had at once become close friends with Frances or Fanny

Blood. To the sixteen-year-old Mary, Fanny (then nineteen) had seemed the epitome of feminine grace and virtue, and Mary, overcome and humiliated by consciousness of her own shortcomings, determined to improve herself. She worked hard to do so, and under Fanny's tutelage Mary Wollstonecraft's powers of analysis and expression began to take shape. Now at twenty-three, instead of returning to Bath or seeking out a new position, Wollstonecraft decided that there was no reason why she should remain separated from the one person for whom her affection was unequivocal, and consequently she moved in to share Fanny's home, family, and life. Unfortunately, things were not to remain unequivocal for long.

The Bloods were in many ways a family like Wollstonecraft's own; Mr. Blood, though neither drunken nor brutal, appears to have been weak and rather inept, and the burden of family support tended to fall on the females in the family by a simple process of elimination. Wollstonecraft's affection for the Bloods (Fanny and her brother George in particular) remained less clouded by the ambivalence and jealousy that so often characterize relationships between family members, but in time her impatience with their ineptitude and the passivity with which they seemed to regard their fate mounted and became something dangerously akin to contempt. Even Fanny was not exempt from this reappraisal, and Wollstonecraft began to suspect that, for all her feminine grace and virtue, Fanny lacked courage and indulged her own timidity and irresolution to a point that was not quite compatible with the perfection Wollstonecraft had seen at sixteen and, in spite of herself, continued to expect.

Wollstonecraft spent eighteen months with the Bloods, months in which she alternately worked and worried herself sick. She had lived with impending poverty for years, but the Bloods' situation was far more drastic than anything the Wollstonecrafts had ever known. Worse yet, the grim realities facing women trying to support their families by genteel occupations, like needlework and painting, were driven home to her in an entirely new way. Along with Mrs. Blood and Fanny, she often sewed from dawn to dusk, harried and distracted not only by seeing her dreams of independence and intellectual companionship vanish with the daylight so desperately needed for work, but also by the realization that the three of them working together could barely earn enough to procure their own necessities, let alone provide for the whole family. Rather than alleviating her family responsibilities by moving in with the Bloods, she had succeeded only in increasing them, and, as if to prove the point, her own family once again called upon her.

Eliza Wollstonecraft, who had married Meredith Bishop in 1782, suffered some sort of nervous breakdown after the birth of her child in August of the following year. By September, Bishop, realizing that the condition might take some time to stabilize, sent for her elder sister. Mary Wollstonecraft arrived prepared to nurse her sister through her illness and then depart leaving her to her husband. Eliza claimed that she had been abused, responded to her husband's presence with fear and revulsion and begged Mary to save her. Mary, who shared the rest of the family's feeling that this had been a lucky match for Eliza, was inclined to see her sister's complaints as a new--if disturbing--symptom of her malady.[29] At some point, however, the elder sister's attitude began to change, and in time she came to believe that if Eliza were not permanently removed from her husband she would lose her sanity altogether. By January, Wollstonecraft was convinced that action was necessary, and, evidently having failed in her attempt to negotiate a peaceful separation by making Bishop see its necessity, she engineered a daring escape. The two women stole away while Bishop was out, changed coaches to cover their tracks, and hid under assumed names on the other side of London--as one biographer remarks, it was a plan "so fantastic that it might well be a bit of Gothic drama".[30] Nonetheless, it worked. Bishop demanded Eliza's return, but did not use the law to force it, and Eliza, even though it meant abandoning her child and being thrown penniless on the world, never went back. Nor did she ever seem to regret her decision.

The intervention between husband and wife is a serious sin, one which has tended to infuriate Mary Wollstonecraft's biographers (who assume the ultimate decision to be Mary's, not Eliza's) even more than it did her contemporaries. Consequently, biographical accounts of this incident are, by and large, both confused and confusing. What is clear (from Wollstonecraft's own letters) is that she genuinely feared for her sister's sanity.[31] Her letters also reveal that she knew if she helped to spirit Eliza away she would be the object of public condemnation. She knew it, and she didn't like it. As yet, Wollstonecraft had no desire to flaunt convention publically and in fact believed the religious virtues of patience and resignation were a more appropriate response to marital problems than active defiance. As Sunstein points out, if it had been Everina who had been in difficulty Mary Wollstonecraft would have been content to deliver her a sermon on not expecting too much of this world and the virtues of living with the misfortunes granted to test one's strength and leave it at that. Eliza, however, was neither as strong nor as forbearing as Everina, as Mary well knew. It is probable that Wollstonecraft saw Eliza's situation as a test of her own integrity: were all her noble sentiments about self-sacrifice so much talk or would she indeed sacrifice public approval and risk her own reputation to save her sister's sanity? It could well have been a false dilemma, but no one--least of all Mary Wollstonecraft--could be sure. She had tried to get Ned--now the nominal head of the family--to intervene, but although he was sympathetic, he refused to be put in a position that would make him either financially or morally responsible for Eliza. After weeks of deliberation, equivocation, and hesitation, Mary Wollstonecraft had acted with a fierce decisiveness that was probably to some extent a compensation for her own fear and ambivalence.

After the fact, disapproval of her action only served to strengthen Wollstonecraft's resolve and her self-righteousness. This was the case partly because she wished to justify her own behavior and partly because she recognized that there was now no point in recrimination and no time for self-analysis. In helping Eliza to escape she had taken on a direct and immediate financial burden. Returning to the Bloods with yet another mouth to feed simply was not feasible. Ned had already refused his house and his money. Bishop, backed by both opinion and law, refused to support his wife unless she returned to his home. While Wollstonecraft's actions had not been designed as either a social protest or a gesture of feminine independence, they inevitably helped to foster such emotions; the next time it would be easier to offend against the rules of propriety, simply because having already damaged her reputation she would have less to lose. Moreover, if she had not exactly broken the social code with impunity, she had nonetheless braved public disapprobation, thus vindicating her personal code of morality and strengthening her belief in herself. Her confidence, albeit tinged with self-righteousness, had reached a new peak and led her willingly back into the search for independence.

After some deliberation, Wollstonecraft decided to open a school--the prerogative not of the qualified but of the desperate. With the help of a Mrs. Sarah Burgh (widow of James Burgh, author of The Dignity of Human Nature and Political Disquisitions among other works), she started a school at Islington, and a few weeks later, again at Mrs. Burgh's suggestion, moved it to Newington Green where Mrs. Burgh herself lived. Fanny, Eliza, and Mary were thus settled; Everina (anxious to quit her state of dependence in her elder brother's house) joined them shortly thereafter; and still later, George Blood (with Wollstonecraft's help) was articled to a lawyer named Palmer and situated near the Green. Mary Wollstonecraft was triumphant. Not only had she solved the pressing problems of her friends and family but she had not had to sacrifice her independence to do it. This time she was not a paid companion or dependent in another's household, but mistress of her own school, a school that was not only doing very well but was, moreover, located in what for her had to be one of the most desirable communities in all of England.

At the head of the circle of Dissenters, who set the intellectual and the religious tone of the Green, was Richard Price, eminent preacher, theologian, philosopher, political theorist, mathematician, and one of the two "leading liberal philosophers of England"[32] (the other was his close friend Joseph Priestley). What it must have meant to Wollstonecraft to be accepted into a group led by a man like Price, to have conversed with one of the best minds of the day, and one in contact with men like Hume, Franklin, Jefferson, Condorcet, Necker, Turgot, and Pitt, is scarce to be imagined. A man of Price's intellectual preeminence could not have failed to exert considerable influence on a young woman who was all too conscious of the shortcomings of her education and fortune and all too aware that her mind was the only weapon she had at her disposal in her struggle to somehow prove herself worthy. Price's common humanity, his tolerance and basic decency, must, however, have impressed her even more and helped to counteract the image of the male left by men like her father, Mr. Blood, and Meredith Bishop. Price's person and his religion influenced her social, religious, and moral beliefs, and Sunstein is certainly correct in her assertion that both "intellectually and emotionally he became for Mary her model, teacher and protector--a benign and superior successor to men like Arden and Clare".[33]

Wollstonecraft's first year in Newington Green was a good one, even apart from her association with Price. She formed new friendships, one in particular with the Reverend John Hewlett, who took her to meet Dr. Samuel Johnson, urged her to write a book based on her experiences at the school, and (after she had taken his advice) helped her arrange its subsequent publication. By 1785, however, things once more looked bleak. Fanny Blood's health was rapidly failing, and, when she received the long-awaited proposal from Hugh Skeys (then in Lisbon), Wollstonecraft (believing that the warmer climate might stop, or at least delay, her deterioration) urged her to accept. George Blood was forced to flee the country, and the fact that Wollstonecraft had been instrumental in his escape did not do her reputation, nor her school, any good.[34] After the departure of Fanny and George, she was not only lonely but increasingly irritated by her sisters' company and what she saw as their general incompetence and flightiness.

When Fanny (now pregnant) asked her to come to Lisbon to nurse her through the last weeks of her pregnancy and see her through childbirth, Mary Wollstonecraft was only too ready to respond. She left for Portugal in September 1785 and returned to Newington Green in late January or early February 1786 to find the school (which she had left in the hands of her sisters) in desperate straits. Coming on top of the deaths of Fanny and her newborn son, the failure of the school was more than she could bear. She could not, fortunately, afford to succumb totally to grief and despair; practical issues had to be attended to: something must be done to stave off her creditors; arrangements made for Eliza and Everina, the servants disposed of, the furniture sold, and a position for herself found. In April and March she dashed off her first book--Thoughts on the Education of Daughters--and managed to get it published. She used the ten pounds she received as a fee to send Mr. and Mrs. Blood to Ireland where George would be able to assume the burden of their support. She borrowed money from Mrs. Burgh (although she herself always believed the money to have come from Price) to pay off a large portion of her debts, convinced Ned to take Everina into his home, and found a suitable position for Eliza. By the fall of 1786 her plans were complete. She had decided to become a writer, to support herself and her sisters through literary endeavour. To do this, she reasoned, she would need time and money to establish herself. Thus, she reluctantly agreed to accept a position as a governess in Ireland at the considerable salary of forty pounds a year, half of which, according to her calculations, she should be able to save to pay off her debts and to defray expenses when she entered her chosen career.

After making a short visit to London to ensure that Joseph Johnson (who had published her book) did not forget her, Wollstonecraft left for Eton to await further instructions from her new employers. What she saw of Eton's educational practices disgusted her and contributed to her growing mood of gloom. She was used to being her own mistress, and in the democratic setting of the Green she had learned to value not only independence but equality. What she had not yet learned, despite their prevalence on the Green, was tolerance and optimism, and she set out for Ireland with a foreboding so strong that it would have been a miracle if her experience had not justified her own pessimistic predictions.

Independent habits of mind and democratic sentiments would not have been widely appreciated in a governess, but Lord and Lady Kingsborough, as it turned out, were in many respects rather awed by their alternately charming and sulky governess and quite willing to go out of their way to appease her. Nonetheless, Wollstonecraft, always sensitive about her social position and still suffering from the death of Fanny and the loss of her school, was in no mood to be pacified by what for her were token and superficial gestures of friendship. In one of her calmer states, she wrote to one of her sisters,

> All ... labor to be civil to me; but we move in so different a sphere, I feel grateful for their attention; but not amused. ... I am treated like a gentlewoman--but I cannot easily forget my inferior station--and this something betwixt and between is rather awkward--it pushes me forward to notice--....[35]

Despite her remark that she objected to being "pushed forward" or to having attention called to herself, Wollstonecraft had no desire to retreat into the safety of nonentity. She had long since decided that mind and morals were more important than position and manners; her experience in Newington Green had not only confirmed her in this opinion but turned it from what had been partly a defensive pose into a genuinely held conviction; if she would once have had qualms about passing judgment on her social superiors, now she had none. The Kingsboroughs were perhaps the richest landowners in Ireland, and Wollstonecraft did not approve of the way in which they lived. In particular, she was scandalized by the indolence and the lack of what she considered proper maternal feelings in aristocratic women. If she made any attempt to conceal the fact that she felt herself to be morally and intellectually superior to women like Lady Caroline Kingsborough, she was far from successful. Caroline Kingsborough, who appears to have been as quick-tempered and strong-willed as Mary Wollstonecraft herself, did not fail to feel the sting of her governess's contempt, and before long their relationship was characterized by a tense competitiveness that continually threatened to explode.

Mary Wollstonecraft seems to have been more than successful in discharging her actual duties as a governess. She insisted upon (and received) total control over her charges' education, won the confidence of the three girls in her care, and re-directed the course of their studies in ways which seemed to meet with everyone's approval. There was, however, one problem: Caroline Kingsborough may not have been overly interested in her children; still, she did not enjoy seeing their affections go elsewhere, and, as it became increasingly clear that they looked upon their new governess not only as a teacher or servant but as a surrogate mother, her annoyance grew.

This might not have been a problem if the two women had not been engaged in battle on other grounds. Wollstonecraft was often included in the Kingsboroughs' social circle, and the lady and the governess frequently found themselves in direct competition for the attention of the parlour and its male occupants. Mary Wollstonecraft may have been as resentful of as flattered by the kind of treatment she received in aristocratic circles, and certainly she was doubtful of the benefits of drawing room conversation, but she was also lonely, and she could be charming. If Lady Kingsborough found Wollstonecraft's general air of conscious rectitude infuriating, she must have been even more unnerved to discover that her governess's desire to attract male attention and her power to compel it were as strong as her own.

Both women sensed that the conflict between them was irresolvable--although both appear to have made sporadic attempts to relieve it--and both knew that it could not go on indefinitely. By the summer of 1787, things had reached an impasse. Wollstonecraft retreated to her room to study and to write--before the summer was out she had finished Mary, A Fiction, and she had been dismissed. The ostensible reason for letting her go was that the children were too fond of her; she had asked for a few days leave, and Margaret Kingsborough's distress at the prospect of her governess being absent for a few days was for Lady Caroline Kingsborough the last straw. Caroline Kingsborough had the first but not the final word in terminating the situation. Mary Wollstonecraft would publish her revenge first in Mary and then again four years later in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; portraits of women who loved their dogs more than their children, portraits drawn if not with absolute fidelity then with a malicious imagination that was more than convincing, would become one of Wollstonecraft's trademarks. It was, as Tomalin remarks, a

> complicated ordeal for all concerned, the first battle on record in which a governess emerged with at least equal honours from the field and revenged herself in print, instead of simply being crushed and swept aside.[36]

Wollstonecraft's year with the Kingsboroughs provided her with the opportunity to exercise her social charm and to observe the aristocracy first hand, as well as affording her sufficient leisure to continue her intellectual studies. These advantages could not, however, make up for what she felt, and what she felt, as she said several times in various ways, was trapped: "I am a something betwixt and between"[37] or, "I am an exile--and in a new world ... Confined to the society of a set of silly females, I have no social converse .... and so does time waste away in apathy or misery ..."[38] or yet more directly, "A state of dependance must ever be irksome to me ...".[39] Her moods alternated between an almost manic gaiety and a profound and irrational depression, and she worried because she knew that both responses were signs of mental instability.[40] Her antagonism towards the Kingsboroughs, and Lady Caroline in particular, reflected her inability to accept her position: the "last poor Governess" she wrote "was treated like a servant";[41] she herself was not, and as she exclaimed over and over she had "no just cause for complaint".[42] Her unhappiness arose, as she points out in her letters between 1786 and 1787, from her own mind, and it was creating a welter of physical symptoms from headaches to stomach spasms to trembling fits to fatigue and lassitude that justified what some biographers have seen as her self-dramatizing concern with her health.

Wollstonecraft's biographers have assigned her depression to various causes ranging from adolescent self-indulgence to sexual repression, but no analysis is more penetrating than her own. She had a well-paid and in many ways, given the realities of eighteenth-century jobs for women, an enviable position. She should have been happy enough; she was not, and she was not because she could not reconcile herself to being nothing more than a governess. She knew too that not only was she not as resigned as her religion and her reason told her she should be but also that she was not as perfect as, not the creature of reason, she wanted to be:

> Since I have been here I have turned over severy [sic] pages in the vast volume of human nature, and what is the amount? Vanity and vexation of spirit--and yet I am tied to my fellow-creatures by partaking of their weaknesses--I rail at a fault--sicken at the sight--and find it stirring within me-- ... I know not myself-- ....[43]

By virtue of her position, Wollstonecraft was forced to play second fiddle to a woman she neither liked nor approved of; she could and did make Caroline Kingsborough afraid of her, and thus ensure that she would be treated with more than common civility, but she could not usurp the Lady's power over her totally, and she could never be at home in her world, regardless of how kindly she was treated. She was suffering because she suspected she was being patronized, because she did not and could not belong. She was suffering, as she said, from loneliness and lovelessness and lack of equality; she was also suffering from frustrated ambition and from guilt for nurturing an ambition so contrary to the governess's code and the feminine code in general. Directly after her dismissal, she attacked the problem directly, with an energy and forthrightness that prove that if her loss of independence had not been the only cause of her nervous complaints it was certainly a contributing factor.

By fall 1787 Wollstonecraft had established herself in London as a writer. She had been fortunate in her choice of a publisher: Joseph Johnson was known for his generosity, his patience, and his willingness to provide both personal and professional assistance to those he befriended. He gave Wollstonecraft regular employment as a reviewer and translator and thus a chance to develop her career, a chance few women had ever received; he introduced her to his friends and thus gave her the opportunity to school and test the abilities of her mind by association with some of the best minds of the day; and most of all, he gave her his friendship, a friendship which sustained her throughout her early years in London and prepared her to master the skills and acquire the confidence that would launch her to the forefront of late eighteenth-century political debate. Johnson was the one indispensable factor in her success, and she knew it. Her letters refer to his "humane and delicate assistance",[44] his "unexpected kindness",[45] and, if she occasionally expressed her sentiments in words that strike the modern reader as somewhat odd ("you were a man before a bookseller",[46] she says addressing Johnson and echoing Cowper's claim for Johnson that "though a bookseller, he has in him the soul of a gentleman"[47]), she usually expressed her gratitude in words that cannot be misunderstood by any century: "I never had a father, or a brother--you have been both to me, ever since I knew you".[48]

Since her first meeting with Fanny Blood, Wollstonecraft had struggled to improve herself, and now, grateful for Johnson's help, but determined to deserve it and acutely aware of the deficiencies in her education, she threw herself into her work. She continued to be involved with her family and friends and their problems, but over the next few years it became increasingly clear that she was relinquishing what she had seen as her duty to mother her circle of dependents. Guilt and anxiety were at least in part the consequences of her conscious decision to act on her own behalf and may help to explain why till the end of her life she felt it necessary to contribute to the support of her relatives and friends even to the detriment of her own financial stability. But guilt and anxiety were rarely allowed to interfere with her work, and the years between her arrival in London and her entry into the public arena of political debate were productive: in 1788 she wrote Original Stories and The Female Reader, completed reviewing and translating assignments for Johnson, and worked almost ceaselessly to rectify what she saw as the gaps in her education and the flaws in her character which might prevent her from succeeding in this new line of work.

Up until the publication of A Vindication of the Rights of Men Mary Wollstonecraft was an unknown quantity, and her first three years in London properly belong to the early phase of her career. By 1790 she had written three books which showed promise, compiled a selection of readings for young girls, completed several translations, mastering at least two new languages in the process, and contributed several rather minor pieces to The Analytical Review. It was an impressive achievement, but not of an order which would have enabled anyone to predict that she would soon be writing polemics or that by 1792 she would publish a work later to be judged "perhaps the most original book of its century ...".[49] For 1787, 1788, 1789, and most of 1790 Wollstonecraft was an apprentice, too busy learning her craft to have time to articulate (even to herself) many of the changes or shifts of emphasis that were occurring in her religious, social, and political views.

In determining to become an author Wollstonecraft was not courting fame but independence, and what she expected was a quiet if useful life of obscurity enlivened by interesting conversation and intellectual companionship. It was not what she got. She was no doubt an ambitious and determined woman, but not even in her wildest imaginings could she have forseen the course her life would take; nor, at this point, is it likely she would have approved of it. She wanted both financial and emotional independence, but if anyone had suggested to the author of Original Stories that the price of that independence would be a dangerous infatuation with a married man, flight to the Continent to escape the humiliation of such an infatuation, residence in revolutionary France during the Reign of Terror, an illicit affair with an American adventurer resulting in an illegitimate child, two suicide attempts, an affair with England's foremost philosopher resulting first in pregnancy, then in marriage, not to mention the authorship of two "notorious" books, she would have been appalled and outraged. It was, however, what was to happen, and it happened partly because of the French Revolution, partly because of her unruly emotions, partly because of her need for extraordinary challenge and accomplishment, and mostly because the very writing of her early works, and Original Stories in particular, changed the woman who wrote them.

Education for Eternity: Determinism, Reason, and Religion in Mary Wollstonecraft's Pedagogy

The eighteenth century placed a good deal of faith in the power of education to create change of one sort or another, and throughout the century education remained a passion common to political opinions of all persuasions. If this was true of the eighteenth century in general, it was even more true of its women: by the late eighteenth century most of the important and widely-discussed books on education were in fact being written by women. According to Tompkins, female novelists

> were most of them by necessity or choice educationists. They taught their own children or other people's; they interested themselves in the village school; and they knew that by education alone could their sex claim its due place in the world. Moreover, they never forgot that the essential business of education is ethical, the enlightening and strengthening of the mind.[50]

For Wollstonecraft, as for many of her contemporaries, education was the means by which society created and sustained itself; it was the art of cultivating the physical, intellectual, aesthetic, and moral faculties of man and therefore was not merely, or even mainly, institutionalized or formal learning, but included the whole process of socialization. Seen in this light, all of Wollstonecraft's work--novels, book reviews, historical commentary, polemics, lyrical love letters--was educational in that it concerned itself with the experiences that formed the character of the individual and of the nation at large.

Long before Wollstonecraft was to use the theories of men like Locke, Hartley, and Helvétius to argue for the reconstruction of society along more democratic and egalitarian lines, she had accepted the basic tenet of their philosophy--that differences between people and nations were not products of either natural or national character, but of education and environment. In 1788 she reviewed a book entitled An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species; her review was emphatic in its agreement with the author's assertion that

> the impressions of education, which singly taken are scarcely discernible, ultimately produce the greatest difference between men in society ....[51]

Four months earlier she had reviewed Sketches of Society and Manners in Portugal, a book which she said could not be

> uninteresting to those who wish to trace to their source the accidental causes from which the similarity of a whole nation sprung, who wish to observe the effect of a religion most absurd, and a government the most arbitrary would have in modifying the human passions.[52]

Wollstonecraft's belief that education was the major determining factor in the development of national and personal character informs not only her reviews but also her more original work. It is true that her early books tend to concentrate on the individual's education and to avoid drawing conclusions about the political system of Britain, but it is also true that her definition of education and its goals did not change appreciably over time.

In 1792 her most radical work provided a clear and explicit statement of what education should do for the individual:

> By individual education, I mean, for the sense of the word is not precisely defined, such an attention to a child as will slowly sharpen the senses, form the temper, regulate the passions as they begin to ferment, and set the understanding to work before the body arrives at maturity; so that the man may only have to proceed, not to begin, the important task of learning to think and reason. ... Consequently, the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason. This was Rousseau's opinion respecting men: I extend it to women ....[53]

Wollstonecraft had in fact extended Rousseau's opinions concerning virtue to women long before she wrote the above passage which is an equally good summary of her early views on education as of her later ones. From the beginning to the end of her career she recommended women be taught to think for themselves, and her early work is just as adamant on this point as her later work would be.

Wollstonecraft's commitment to education arose in part out of her conviction that her own education and early experiences were responsible for much of her misery and general dissatisfaction. As early as 1780 (when she was twenty-one) she had complained that girls were educated for frivolity rather than morality,[54] and by 1786 her experiences as a teacher and governess, her observations of Eton's educational system and of the life in aristocratic circles, and her reading of Rousseau had further convinced her that a misdirected education was worse than none at all. Nonetheless, she believed that the general stupidity of parents and the insidious consequences of common practice were too widespread to simply ignore; consequently, unlike Rousseau, she used her work not to design an ideal education, but to outline principles and practices intended to rectify the effects of a conventional one.

Despite her belief that early training formed the temper and established the habits which would to a large extent control the individual's life, Wollstonecraft was no complete determinist. She insisted that a mind trained to observe and reflect upon its own experience could achieve sufficient strength to counteract the force of early education. There would, of course, be little need for this if childhood had been properly attended to in the first place, but as stated previously Wollstonecraft believed that a careful attention to childrearing was rare, and consequently in her work the emphasis was not so much on education as on re-education or self-education. Romantic enough to believe that a reasoning self-awareness could overcome the determinism implicit in her theory of learning through environment, experience, and association, she nonetheless was realistic enough to expect the process of increasing awareness by strengthening the mind to be both difficult and painful. She was, however, no stern puritan who believed that pain was a punishment for sin or human depravity; rather, she believed—and needed to believe--that there was some acceptable rationale for pain, that in some way or another it could be a valuable experience because, and only because, it would lead to a greater good. It was in fact this—the varying rationales that she provided for human suffering--that distinguishes the early pedagogy from the middle and late phases of her career.

From the beginning to the end of her career, Wollstonecraft believed that

i) education was the single most important factor in the determination of the physical, mental, and moral health of the individual and thus of the society at large; or, in other words, that there was a direct cause and effect relationship between education and both personal and national character

ii) the primary goal of education was to produce a moral character; moreover, if an individual was to be held responsible for his/her actions then each must act according to the dictates of his/her own conscience and could not escape moral choice by a simple reliance upon external authority: therefore, independence was a prerequisite of morality

iii) education was a life-long process, and given what Wollstonecraft called "the present state of society"[55] the most important part of that process would be neither formal nor institutionalized learning, but rather would proceed from the individual's learning to observe and reflect upon his/her own experience

iv) while human beings had been given innate moral principles to ensure that self-interest was not their only motivation, nor self-gratification their only desire, practical virtue was dependent on the mind's ability to discern the factors involved in moral choice and to weigh the opposing claims of heart and head; thus, by exercising and strengthening the mind's reasoning powers, education could foster the development of morality.

These ideas are central to Wollstonecraft's thought as a whole and equally representative of her early, middle, and late work. In themselves the ideas were neither conventional nor unconventional; if not common, they were at least not uncommon eighteenth-century beliefs, and it was not the ideas, but the conclusions or recommendations drawn from them that determined the political colouring of their author.

From 1786 to 1789 the ways in which Wollstonecraft used these theories and the forms in which she embodied them were kept safely within the bounds set for women writers by her attempt to explain human suffering in terms of the workings of a Divine plan which could only partially be penetrated or understood by human reason. Life was the education for eternity; God, the teacher who sent affliction "to correct, not crush us",[56] or, as Wollstonecraft phrases it in her first book,

> The main business of our lives is to learn to be virtuous; and He who is training us up for immortal bliss, knows best what trials will contribute to make us so; and our resignation and improvement will render us respectable to ourselves, and to that Being, whose approbation is of more value than life itself. It is true, tribulation produces anguish, and we would fain avoid the bitter cup, though convinced its effects would be the most salutary. The Almighty is then the kind parent, who chastens and educates, and indulges us not when it would tend to our hurt. He is compassion itself, and never wounds but to heal, when the ends of correction are answered.[57]

The Divine plan could be used not only to explain the suffering over which Man had no control, but also to justify the self-created pain that Wollstonecraft believed to be a necessary consequence of the proper kind of education. The question "whether intellectual acquirements gained here are of any service or pleasure hereafter?"[58] was argued by Wollstonecraft and Henry Gabell (an Anglican clergyman of her acquaintance) in a written debate. Wollstonecraft's half of the correspondence has survived; answering the question in the affirmative, she argues as follows:

> I am of the opinion that much may be said on both sides of the question--and yet cannot entirely coincide with you. It appears to me self-evident, that an All-wise and good Being created nothing in vain. He cannot be mistaken, or cause needless pain. Ignorance would be desirable if all our attainments had reference only to our present

> mode of existence. Man would then disquiet himself in vain--and enlarge his mind, for no other purpose: but to extend the dominion of sorrow, and sharpen the arrows of affliction. A *good* understanding prevents a person's enjoying the common pleasures of this life--if it does not prepare him for a better it is a *curse*.[59]

She goes on to argue that for many reasons moral cannot be separated from intellectual improvement and concludes her case thus:

> It is true that our reasonings are often fallacious--and our knowledge mostly conjectural --yet these flights into an obscure region open the faculties of the soul. St. Paul says, "we *see* through a glass *darkly*"--but he does not assert that we are blind. ... In short the more I reflect, the less apt am I to concur with you--if I did, I should envy *comfortable* folly-- "Fat contented ignorance"! ... The main hinge on which my argument turns is this, refinement genius--and those charming talents which my soul instinctively loves, produce misery in this world--abundantly more pain than pleasure. ... Besides sensibility renders the path of duty more intricate--and the warfare *much* more severe-- Surely *peculiar* wretchedness has something to balance it![60]

Without the example of God's love, without the motive and incentive provided by a belief in an afterlife, Wollstonecraft believed that there would be little point in education and no point at all in the kind of education that demanded the individual look into his own heart and mind. Morality was for her, as for many others, indisputably based on religious faith, and without it there was no hope for improvement at all: "Morality, or religion, for we use them as synonimous terms, is the soul of all, the animating principle; without it a body may be admirably organized, yet remain inert".[61]

It is not surprising, then, that Mary Wollstonecraft's early work is as much religious as educational. To the modern reader it can in fact appear as if her educational concerns are all but engulfed by the religious justifications which dominate her prose and at times seem to interfere with her logic. Given the twentieth century's difficulty in appreciating eighteenth-century religious reasoning, it is important to remember that Wollstonecraft believed that without God the Christian virtues of patience, submission, resignation, humility, and self-denial--the very virtues recommended with such particular urgency to women and to the poor--would make little sense and be exceedingly difficult to justify. Religion was not only the means by which the individual was educated for eternity but also the one way in which he (or particularly she) could be reconciled to the restraints and harsh realities of everyday life.

It would be stretching the truth to insist that Wollstonecraft's emphasis on religious training was little more than an educational metaphor, but it is nonetheless true that she saw even religion in educational terms. Moreover, her faith was a strange compound of personal need and conventional religion: while she was a "deeply believing Christian",[62] her beliefs did not conform to any one church or sect, and her Christianity was as much formed by her adolescent wanderings through the countryside and imagined conversations with a God who loved her, even if her parents did not, as it was by the various theologians she had read and the Anglican and Dissenting ministers she knew. If she did not doubt, she experimented with her religious views, subjecting them to rational inquiry and allowing herself considerable freedom to draw her own conclusions, and this predisposition to experimentation--the belief that all views, including religious ones, must ultimately be tested by personal experience and individual reasoning--is obvious even in her early work.[63]

By 1790, however, a new influence was at work on Wollstonecraft, and it was one that would promote startlingly new conclusions in her pedagogy by re-directing her thought and by switching her focus from the next world to this one. This new influx of ideas was no more unique to her thought than the general optimism about the power of education, or than her religious faith, had been, but her enthusiasm for the French Revolution was shared by a much smaller group.

The Revolution did not change Mary Wollstonecraft's basic outlook or beliefs or her pedagogical values or goals or destroy her religious faith; rather it, and the group of English radicals who supported it and with whom she came to identify herself, gave her a broader sphere in which to put her ideas in play, created a new stimulus for old ideas and a new rationale for them, and strengthened her faith that change really was possible. As mentioned above, the belief that education could transform the nature of society, and especially its moral nature, was current in England long before the French Revolution, but the Revolution for a time gave impetus and support to a certain section of English believers that not only *could* education change the face of the world but that in France it was about to *do* so. Its ideals and the hope it came to symbolize for English radicals provided Mary Wollstonecraft with a new faith and thus a new rationale for pain, for if human suffering was a consequence not of God's will but of corrupt human institutions then pain *was* needless and should not be justified but eradicated.

Wollstonecraft's *Vindications* take up this battle: they emerged out and were part of the zeal and the optimism that was given new meaning and new life by the struggle for liberty or for "the natural rights of men" in France. But Wollstonecraft had been schooled to embrace this new faith by her older one, and the proof of that schooling is recorded in her early works and in the development of thought that occurred within the early period as a whole.

NOTES

[1] J.M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 (London: Constable & Co., 1932; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 1961), pp. 118-19.

[2] P.J. Miller, "The Education of an English Lady, 1770-1820", Diss. University of Alberta, 1969, p. 111.

[3] Critical Review, June 1771, p. 479, as quoted in Tompkins, p. 2.

[4] Tompkins, p. 120.

[5] See Tompkins, pp. 119-20.

[6] Tompkins, p. 120.

[7] Ellen Moers, Preface to Literary Women (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1976), n. pag.

[8] Tompkins, p. 121.

[9] See Miller, pp. 250-51.

[10] See Miller, p. 213.

[11] Critical Review, 1776, as quoted in Tompkins, p. 123.

[12] Tompkins, p. 150.

[13] Tompkins, pp. 129-30.

[14] Moers, p. 125.

[15] Tompkins, p. 116.

[16] "To Joseph Johnson", 13 September [1787], Letter 63, C.L. of M.W., p. 159.

[17] Both quotations in the sentence are from Miller, p. 336.

[18] The early facts of Wollstonecraft's life still remain somewhat obscure: she was born in either London or Epping Forest; her mother's maiden name was either Dickson or Dixon; and she was the second

of either six or seven children. The only one of these confusions to make any real difference is the last for Emily Sunstein's (see pp. 7, 18, 34-38, 48, 90, 138-139, 145-47, 197, and 303) argument that there was in fact a seventh child, a one Henry Woodstock Wollstonecraft, who was baptized early in 1761, who later went insane and had to be put in an asylum helps to explain many of Mary Wollstonecraft's reactions to painful situations in her life and in particular explains her fear for her sister's sanity in 1783 and her fear for her own at various points in her life.

[19] "To Jane Arden", [1773-1774], Letter 5, C.L. of M.W., p. 60.

[20] Claire Tomalin, The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft (New York: New American Library, A Mentor Book, 1974), p. 3.

[21] Taylor, p. 42.

[22] Sunstein, p. 17.

[23] Mary Wollstonecraft, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct in the More Important Duties of Life, (1787), Reprints of Economic Classics (Clifton: Augustus M. Kelley, 1972), pp. 82-83; hereafter cited as M.W., Thoughts.

[24] "To Jane Arden", [May-June 1779], Letter 9, C.L. of M.W., p. 66.

[25] The Clares were neighbours of the Wollstonecraft family in Hoxton; Mr. Clare was a retired clergyman, something of a recluse, perhaps an invalid, and certainly somewhat eccentric, and he and his wife seem to have taken the young Mary Wollstonecraft under their wing, supplied her with attentive affection, and (according to some biographers) taken a direct interest in her education encouraging her to read and starting her off with Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and Johnson (see Tomalin, pp. 12f); the Clares, thinking Mary Wollstonecraft needed a friend of her own age, also seem to have introduced her to Fanny Blood who was to play an important role in Mary Wollstonecraft's life.

[26] Wardle, M.W., p. 15.

[27] Wardle, M.W., p. 15.

[28] Whether or not Wollstonecraft met Waterhouse in Bath sometime between 1779 and 1781 or not until sometime later is still an arguable question; if she did in fact meet him in Bath and suffered some sort of disappointment in the course of her relationship with him, it would help to explain her growing mood of gloom and her decision not to marry: " ... for which reason I will not marry, for I dont want to be tied to

this nasty world, and old maids are of so little consequence--that 'let them live or die, nobody will laugh or cry'.--It is a happy thing to be a mere blank, and to be able to pursue one's own whims, where they lead, without having a husband and half a hundred children at hand to teaze and controul a poor woman who wishes to be free.--Some may follow St. Paul's advice 'in doing well,' but I, like a true born Englishwoman, will endeavour to do better." ("To Jane Arden", [October 20 1782--August 10 1783], Letter 16, C.L. of M.W., p. 79.)

[29] "My sister however has done well, and married a worthy man, whose situation in life is truly eligible." ("To Jane Arden", [October 1782--August 1783], Letter 16, C.L. of M.W., p. 79.)

[30] Margaret George, One Woman's "Situation": A Study of Mary Wollstonecraft (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 56.

[31] If Sunstein is correct in her theory that one member of the Wollstonecraft family had already suffered a permanent breakdown and had to be committed to an asylum, Mary Wollstonecraft's fears for her sister need no more explaining; even without such a family history, Eliza's symptoms (as described in her letters from Mary to Everina Wollstonecraft)--her "raving fits" and her irrationality--sound quite serious enough to have justified her elder sister's concern.

[32] Wardle, M.W., p. 32.

[33] Sunstein, p. 97; the Arden referred to in the quotation was Jane Arden's father, a schoolmaster of sorts, whom Wollstonecraft had known and possibly taken some instruction from in Beverley as a girl; she had probably seen him again in Bath where he was giving public lectures which Wollstonecraft mentioned in one of her letters to his daughter, Jane (see "To Jane Arden", [May-June 1779], Letter 8, C.L. of M.W., pp. 64-65.

[34] The attorney to whom George Blood had been articled was arrested for forgery. Wollstonecraft and George himself both seem to have assumed when baliffs came looking for him that he had been unfairly implicated in the crime; but, as Wollstonecraft later wrote him, the charge brought against him was not accessory to forgery but a paternity suit. It is not clear whether or not Wollstonecraft believed him to be guilty, but it is clear that she did not begrudge him her help, nor did the incident lessen her affection for him.

[35] "To Eliza W. Bishop", Nov. 5 [1786], Letter 41, C.L. of M.W., p. 124.

[36] Tomalin, p. 43.

[37] "To Everina Wollstonecraft", March 25 [1787], Letter 56, C.L. of M.W., p. 147.

[38] "To Everina Wollstonecraft", Nov. 17 [1786], Letter 43, C.L. of M.W., pp. 126-27.

[39] "To Joseph Johnson", Dec. 5 [1786], Letter 45, C.L. of M.W., p. 130.

[40] Mary Wollstonecraft's self-diagnosis--"My reason has been too far stretched, and tottered almost on the brink of madness" ("To the Reverend Henry Dyson Gabell", April 16 [1787], Letter 58, C.L. of M.W., p. 150)--is taken quite seriously only by Sunstein (see p. 138) who believes that Wollstonecraft was quite literally afraid she was losing her mind, that she feared mental breakdown like that suffered by her sister Eliza or her brother Henry.

[41] "To Evernina Wollstonecraft", Feb. 10 [1787], Letter 49, C.L. of M.W., p. 135.

[42] "To George Blood", Dec. 4 [1786], Letter 44, C.L. of M.W., p. 128.

[43] "To Everina Wollstonecraft", May 11 1787, Letter 59, C.L. of M.W., p. 151 (her emphasis).

[44] "To Joseph Johnson", [late 1789-early 1790], Letter 85, C.L. of M.W., p. 186 (her emphasis).

[45] "To Joseph Johnson", [mid-1788], Letter 77, C.L. of M.W., p. 178.

[46] "To Joseph Johnson", [mid-1788], Letter 76, C.L. of M.W., p. 177 (her emphasis).

[47] William Cowper, Letters, as quoted in Tomalin, p. 65.

[48] "To Joseph Johnson", [mid-1788], Letter 78, C.L. of M.W., p. 178.

[49] H.N. Brailsford, Shelley, Godwin and Their Circle, (1913), 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 143.

[50] Tompkins, p. 142.

[51] The Analytical Review, December 1788, p. 436.

[52] The Analytical Review, August 1788, p. 451.

[53] Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792),

rpt. of 2nd ed. (also 1792) ed. and introd. Charles W. Hagelman, Jr. (New York: W.W. Norton - The Norton Library, 1967), pp. 51-52; hereafter cited as M.W., V.R.W.

[54] See "To Jane Arden", [June-August 1780], Letter 13, C.L. of M.W., p. 74.

[55] Mary Wollstonecraft, Preface to Original Stories from Real Life with Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections, and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness (1788), 1791 ed. illus. William Blake, 1906 rpt. introd. E.V. Lucas, incl. Blake illus. (London: Henry Frowde, 1906), n. pag.; hereafter cited as M.W., Or. St.

[56] M.W., Or. St., p. 62.

[57] M.W., Thoughts, pp. 77-78.

[58] "To the Reverend Henry Dyson Gabell", April 16 [1787], Letter 58, C.L. of M.W., p. 150.

[59] "To the Reverend Henry Dyson Gabell", April 16 [1787], Letter 58, C.L. of M.W., p. 149 (her emphasis throughout).

[60] "To the Reverend Henry Dyson Gabell", April 16 [1787], Letter 58, C.L. of M.W., pp. 149-50 (her emphasis throughout).

[61] The Analytical Review, August 1789, p. 410.

[62] Eleanor Flexner, Mary Wollstonecraft: A Biography (1972; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 96.

[63] Her rejection of the concept of hell is one example of such a process.

CHAPTER III

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S EARLY WORKS: REALISTIC ACCOMMODATION AND ROMANTIC REBELLION

Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: A Woman's Book

Mary Wollstonecraft's first book, written in 1786 and published in 1787, was a collection of twenty-three short essays entitled Thoughts on the Education of Daughters with Reflections on Female Conduct in the More Important Duties of Life. The book is usually referred to simply as Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, but, as its full title indicates, it did not restrict itself to comments on childrearing. From "The Nursery" to "Love" and "Matrimony" to "Exterior Accomplishments" and "Boarding Schools" to the "Unfortunate Situation of Females, Fashionably Educated, and Left Without a Fortune" to "The Benefits Which Arise from Disappointment" to "Reading" and "The Fine Arts", the essays were (as these representative titles taken from the chapter headings reveal) intended to trace the development of women in general and to expound on all subjects that might be of concern to them. Indeed, Thoughts has considerably more to say on how women should live their lives than it does on how girls should be schooled, for Wollstonecraft believed that if women were to educate their offspring they must first educate themselves.

Thoughts is, then, concerned with the education of women in the widest sense of the word education, and of all Mary Wollstonecraft's early works it is the most self-assured, the pithiest, the most tough-minded. Neither a summary of its chapter headings nor a précis of its contents can do justice to its far-ranging interests nor to the crisp authority of its prose. Thoughts is not a feminist book, but it is the first statement of Wollstonecraft's feminism:

> ... nay, many women always retain the pretty prattle of the nursery, and do not forget to lisp, when they have learnt to languish.[1]
>
> This meek spirit arises from good sense and resolution, and should not be confounded with indolence and timidity; weakness of mind, which often pass for good nature. She who submits, without conviction, to a parent or husband, will as unreasonably tyrannize over her servants; for slavish fear and tyranny go together.[2]
>
> Early marriages are, in my opinion, a stop to improvement ....
> Many are but just returned from a boarding-school, when they are placed at the head of a family, and how fit they are to manage it, I leave the judicious to judge. Can they improve a child's understanding, when they are scarcely out of the state of childhood themselves?[3]

From these sentiments, Wollstonecraft comes to exactly the same conclusion that she would later draw in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Namely, that

> No employment of the mind is a sufficient excuse for neglecting domestic duties, and I cannot conceive that they are incompatible.[4]

Women, she argues in both Thoughts and A Vindication (and, it might be added, argues with the full approval of the eighteenth century in general), are the moral guardians of society; the importance of a woman's duties cannot be overestimated, since it is she who directs the education of her children and provides the example which will imperceptibly mould their characters, but the deficient education most women receive leads to weakness, and "the weakest have it in their power to do most mischief".[5]

Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, however, despite the similarity of its argument, is not A Vindication of the Rights of Woman writ small. It argues many of the same points, holds many of the same convictions, and is just as likely to express itself in lively flashes of bitter resentment, but ultimately the presentation and shaping of its ideas are not directed towards change, but towards a realistic accommodation to the accepted rules of eighteenth-century society which governed the lives of middle-class women. It is, in fact, in many ways, a typical example of what literary historians studying the eighteenth century refer to as a woman's courtesy book.[6]

The theme of the woman's courtesy book was "education by adversity";[7] its structure or plot the result of the conflict between sense and sensibility; its morality prudential; and its purpose "to vindicate the importance of woman in her domestic relationships and instruct her how best to undertake and sustain them".[8] This is a fair description of the theme, structure, morality, and purpose of Wollstonecraft's first book, which claims that "adversity is mercifully sent us to force us to think";[9] that the conflict between head and heart is so constant and so severe as to make this life a "warfare";[10] that prudence is a woman's safeguard; and that to achieve prudence, and both the personal peace and general social tranquillity that prudence will secure, it is necessary that wise and watchful mothers lay the foundations for good characters.

As might be expected in a work intended to train girls for the whole business of womanhood, Thoughts has something to say on almost every aspect of a woman's life from makeup, fashion, beauty, and coquetry to the serious business of love and marriage or, if necessary, earning a living. Again in this, it is typical—not only of the eighteenth-century courtesy book but also of the scores of women's magazines published today. But it is on the topic of love that Wollstonecraft most closely aligns herself with the novelists of her own day. Female writers had a very clear impression of the precarious position women were in: given the laws and attitudes of the land, not to mention the lack of birth control, the high mortality rate of women in childbirth, and the near impossibility of divorce, womanhood was indeed a dangerous state; love and sexuality could quite literally be fatal. Thus, the woman's book approaches the subject of love with some trepidation, recommending caution, advising prudence, always choosing safety over passion, and regarding even the most innocent happiness with the practised suspicion of those who know things are never what they seem and treachery never far from hand. Mary Wollstonecraft's Thoughts is no exception:

> The heart is very treacherous, and if we do not guard its first emotions, we shall not afterwards be able to prevent its sighing for impossibilities. If there are any insuperable bars to an union in the common way, try to dismiss the dangerous tenderness, or it will undermine your comfort, and betray you into many errors. ... it may be wise sometimes not to stray too near a precipice, lest we fall over before we are aware.[11]

> A woman cannot reasonably be unhappy if she is attached to a man of sense and goodness, though he may not be all she could wish for.
>
> I am very far from thinking love irrestible, and not to be conquered. "If weak women go astray," it is they, and not the stars, that are to be blamed. A resolute endeavour will almost always overcome difficulties.[12]

Reason, religion, and resignation as the antidotes to the temptations represented by passion, happiness, or the desire for personal fulfillment is an idea that cannot be said to have met with the twentieth century's full approval, and Wollstonecraft biographers tend to discount it by numbering it among the merely personal responses Wollstonecraft devised to sublimate her own sexuality and longing for love. Emily Sunstein sees Thoughts as a book which is altogether more convincing in its description of the problems of a woman's life than in its resolution of them:

> The conflict between reason and passion is a constant theme throughout, and resolution in favor of reason and resignation in religion the lesson. Passion and talk of passion, anger at parents, pride, temperament, longing for love, childish insistence on perfection, fault finding, pessimism, all are counteracted by self-control, conscience, duty, intellect, reason, religious faith, and irrespressible optimism. ... Thoughts is a literal illustration of the high wire on which Mary Wollstonecraft balanced herself.[13]

While Sunstein's analysis aptly sums up the thematic content of Wollstonecraft's first book and attempts to relate it to the concerns of her life, it does not take into account the hundreds of books written in this period of which one could say exactly the same thing. Women and their problems were interesting--at least to other women--and when women began to write they addressed themselves to their own lives and, in accordance with the whole of their society, concluded that the only qualities which could temper and control the dangerous condition of womanhood were religion and resignation. And Thoughts, despite its emphasis on independence, is essentially a product of this tradition.

But prudence and resignation did not come easily or naturally to all women just because they were seen and accepted as necessary virtues. Indeed, much of the energy of women's writing--and this is certainly true of Wollstonecraft's prose--is the product of tension: realistic accommodation is competing, on one hand, with a dangerous fatalism, a tendency to let prudence move from being what Tompkins calls "self-government in the interests of the community" to "a courageous acceptance of second best", and, on the other, with a desire to rebel, to assert oneself, and to damn the consequences.[14] The temptation to rebel and the desire to succumb were the two extremes that women writers walked carefully between. What Sunstein refers to as Wollstonecraft's "balancing act" was not merely the accident of personal history but the social obligation of the eighteenth-century female.

Wollstonecraft's need to force all the aspects of her knowledge and the warring elements of her personality into a coherent whole and to provide *herself* with a consistent rationale for her beliefs did, however, even in this first book, separate her from those of her female contemporaries content to accept things on faith. From the beginning, Wollstonecraft placed her faith in experience and relied upon her own reason to interpret it; her notions about experience were built on the "education by adversity" theme typical of the woman's book, but they were also informed and extended by her reading of John Locke.

The Influence of John Locke on Wollstonecraft's Pedagogy

John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1699) opened new eras in philosophical, political, and educational thought. Locke's influence on the eighteenth century--and indeed on the twentieth--need not be argued: *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* has formed the background for educational debate from his day to the present, just as his political and philosophical writings furnish many of the ideas on which Western political theory has come to be based. The precarious balance between free will and determinism in his philosophy, and between permissiveness and parental control in his educational philosophy, is at once the strength and weakness of his work. On one hand, his desire to use common sense to reconcile seeming opposites leads him to contradict himself, thus undermining his theoretical framework; on the other, the empirical bias to which his inconsistencies may be attributed means that his work raises questions important to any position and appeals to a wide range of minds, while the inconsistencies themselves allow his work to be used as the basis for separate and opposing positions.

In general the eighteenth century espoused Locke's faith in the power of education, but beyond this point controversy reigned, and writers influenced by Locke would not necessarily have been in complete agreement either with one another or with Locke himself. Some degree of influence or similarity of views between Locke and those who followed is only to be expected, but in Mary Wollstonecraft's case not only the similarity of views but the spirit in which inquiry is undertaken and ideas expressed--the whole framework of her Thoughts on the Education of Daughters--reveals a degree and directness of influence that prove that she had read Locke closely, found herself in basic agreement with both his methods and his conclusions, and determined to apply Lockean principles to the one major area of concern that he had seemingly overlooked--the education of girls.

Wollstonecraft's Thoughts, like Locke's, advises parents to foster curiosity in their children by answering all their questions, praising their inquisitiveness, and never lying to them. It claims that because "true humility is not innate, but like every other good quality must be cultivated", and further because "there is not a temper in the world which does not need correction, and of course attention", that "health of mind, as well as of body, must in general be obtained by patient submission to self-denial, and disagreeable operations". The book, again following Locke, goes on to argue that an "uncorrected temper" is responsible for "half the miseries of life", unnecessary though they would have been "if we were early put into the right road", and concludes that rather than being subjected to harsh and often injudicious punishment children should have their admirable actions and emotions "continually retraced 'till they grow into habits", so that "the path of duty will be found pleasant after some time", and "the passions being employed in this way, will, by degrees, come under the subjection of reason".[15]

Strictures against allowing children to read from the Bible, comments on the "subversive" influence of servants, cautions about the limited usefulness of memorization as a pedagogical tool, concern with artificial or affected manners, the belief that children should learn by imitation and action not by rules or precepts, remarks on the educational importance of children being kind to animals, emphasis on health, diet, exercise, and physical strength—are but a few examples of the detailed pedagogical recommendations made in Wollstonecraft's Thoughts, and all are first found in Locke. Terms such as predominant passion, prevailing inclinations, impulse, appetite, natural genius shape the pedagogical vocabulary of Thoughts and they, too, are first found in Locke. Wollstonecraft's belief that children are best moulded by a method relying on affection, guidance, and reinforcement is drawn from Locke, as is her insistence that "order leads to some degree of morality"[16] and that "whatever tends to make a person in some measure independent of the senses, is a prop to virtue".[17] Like Locke, Wollstonecraft believed that the first duty of education was to fix good principles in the child's mind by inculcating good habits in his behavior and the second to strengthen the child's mind, and thus his moral character, in general. From its detailed pedagogical recommendations to its purpose of arguing the importance of habits, order, and early education to morality in general to its structure and language, Wollstonecraft's first book is clearly indebted to Locke. Moreover, she acknowledged her debt to him by pointing out (as he himself had done) the one great hindrance to the practicality of the system he had designed:

> To be able to follow Mr. Locke's system (and this may be said of almost all treatises on education) the parents must have subdued their own passions, which is not often the case in any considerable degree.[18]

It is not, however, merely Wollstonecraft's espousal of Locke's system, nor her agreement with his definition of virtue as the ability of the individual "to deny himself of his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way",[19] nor even her Lockean belief that reason is the highest faculty of man, "the foundation of all virtue and worth",[20] and thus that the business of education is to prepare the way for reason and that such work cannot begin too soon, that reveals the pervasiveness of Locke's influence on Wollstonecraft. Rather it is her approach to her work which, like Locke's own, was empirical and therefore often self-contradictory, sometimes tentative and cautious, at others assertive and dogmatic, never showing undue reverence for established positions or received opinions, and ultimately concerned with balance, with reconciling the dictates of reason to the facts of experience.

Childhood, in Locke's view, was a dependent and inferior state: children, until their powers of reason developed, had to be subjected to external control and authority; as it was, however, desirable to quit any state of dependence as quickly as possible, children were from the beginning "to be treated as rational creatures",[21] a method which Locke believed would promote the development of reason and thereby help the child attain the enviable status of adulthood. In theory, at least, adults were capable, as children were not, of self-government, of controlling their appetites and passions by subjecting them to the commands of their own reason, and in this both personal morality and social responsibility lie. The man, Locke argued, learns to submit his will to his reason by the child's first learning to submit his will to his parents' reasoned (not their passionate) decisions and commands. This child--the child who has had to accustom himself to being denied and who has learnt to accept the deliberate thwarting of his will--was the father of the moral man.

Locke's pedagogy, then, stresses two major things: the obedient child and the reasonable parent. Though Wollstonecraft was an exception, most critics of Locke, from his day to our own, whether agreeing or disagreeing with his system, have tended to emphasize the injunctions he would lay on the child and ignore, or at least downplay, those he would place on the parent. Parents, Locke warned, must love their children, and, while they should be careful to love them "without cherishing their faults", "the faults of the age" should be indulged, as an unreasonable severity would cripple a child with a thoroughness that not even overindulgence could match. Only the impulse to power (natural, but the root of all social evil) merited severe punishment--noise, bustle, activity, "gamesome humor", forgetfulness, impatience, and occasional rudeness were natural to children and proper in them, as they proceeded from the innate human desire for freedom, variety, and action, which, like the desire for knowledge and approval, could, with a little work and time, be turned to good purpose. Parents might, he said, even learn from their child's untutored and therefore unbiassed view of the world, and they should certainly realize that to teach the child they would have to observe the strengths and weaknesses of his individual temper and suit their instruction to it. Duty, to attract and hold the child's attention, had to be made not only pleasant but delightful, and it was the parents' duty to ensure this happened.[22]

Children, in Locke's opinion, liked to be treated as adults, liked to imitate adults, and if they once could be convinced learning and duty were the prerogatives of their elders, they would apply themselves with the same diligence and painstaking labour with which they went to play. Application to duty should be rewarded, and once they had been made sensible of the state of reputation work gained them, there would be no stopping them, and more work could in fact be made the reward for the first task. But, in all this, the parent had to remember that before any child (or adult for that matter) would willingly undertake work, work had to be pleasant and, to some extent, had to cater to natural desires--"constraint" was "always to be avoided", and the truth of the statement "he that will make good use of any part of his life, must allow a large portion of it to recreation" to be recognized.[23]

In short, as Locke was against indulgence of willful behavior, so he was against compulsion and tyranny, and for him the art of teaching is the art of striking a reasonable balance:

> He that has not a mastery over his inclinations, he that knows not how to resist the importunity of present pleasure or pain, for the sake of what reason tells him is fit to be done, wants the true principle of virtue and industry, and is in danger never to be good for anything. This temper therefore, so contrary to unguided nature, is to be got betimes; and this habit,

> as the true foundation of future ability and happiness, is to be wrought into the mind as early as may be, even from the first dawnings of knowledge or apprehension in children ....
>
> On the other side, if the mind be curbed and humbled too much in children; if their spirits be abased and broken much, by too strict a hand over them, they lose all vigor and industry, and are in a worse state than the former. ... dejected minds, timorous and tame, and low spirits are hardly ever to be raised, and very seldom attain to anything. To avoid the danger that is on either hand is the great art; and he that has found a way to keep a child's spirit easy, active, and free, and yet at the same time to restrain him from many things he has a mind to, and draw him to things that are uneasy to him; he, I say, that knows how to reconcile these seeming contradictions, has, in my opinion, got the true secret of education.[24]

Insofar as Thoughts on the Education of Daughters addresses itself to parents, it recommends a regimen exactly like the one described above, and its primary concern is to establish a proper balance between authoritarian control and affectionate indulgence. Parents, Wollstonecraft says, must cultivate "a rational affection" for their offspring, and, as "the warmth with which we engage in any business increases its importance", the way for parents to produce this emotion in themselves is simply to "perform the office" of a parent, involving themselves in the task of educating their own children, rather than leaving it to servants or schools. Further, the first duty of a rational parent is observation, and not merely observation of the child's temper, but observation of the effect of discipline on that temper. Like Locke, Wollstonecraft believed that punishment had to be carefully meted out or it would spoil the temper without correcting the child--authority, she says, is proper and necessary, but care must be taken "not to make hypocrites; smothered flames will blaze out with more violence for having been kept down". Children subjected to too many rules, enforced with too great a severity, instead of becoming responsible adults, were likely to become hypocrites, cowards, or rebels.[25]

In a passage reminiscent of Locke's recommendation to control the child, but to do it with "kind words and gentle admonitions",[26] Wollstonecraft writes:

> I once heard a judicious father say, "He would treat his child as he would his horse: first convince it he was its master, and then its friend." But yet a rigid style of behavior is by no means to be adopted; on the contrary, I wish to remark, that it is only in the years of childhood that the happiness of a human being depends entirely upon others--and to embitter those years by needless restraint is cruel. To conciliate affection, affection must be shown, and little proofs of it ought always to be given--let them not appear weaknesses, and they will sink deep into the young mind, and call forth its most amiable propensities.[27]

Thoughts goes on to argue that while the importance of subjecting impulses and passions to reason is indisputable, "due allowance ought to be made for human infirmities"[28] and explains itself as follows:

> I mean not to be rigid, the obstructions which arise in the way of our duty, do not strike a speculatist; I know, too, that in the moment of action, even a well-disposed mind is often carried away by the present impulse, and that it requires some experience to be able to distinguish the dictates of reason from those of passion. The truth is seldom found out until the tumult is over; we then wake as from a dream, and when we survey what we have done, and feel the folly of it, we might call on reason and say, why sleepest thou? Yet though people are led astray by their passions, and even relapse after the most bitter repentance, they should not despair, but still try to regain the right road, and cultivate such habits as may assist them.[29]

Both Locke and Wollstonecraft, then, recommend a system of child care that relies heavily on parents' discretion, their powers of observation, and their commitment to the painstaking time-consuming effort necessary to produce a moral, intelligent, and healthy child. The key concept in such a system is balance, or, as Locke put it, the reconciling of "seeming contradictions".[30] Rules may be given, and in general it may be said that "good principles and established habits"[31] are the best safeguards against vice, but, in managing the child, the individual temper must be taken into account and allowance made for special cases, or, as Wollstonecraft says

> It may be observed, that I recommend the mind's being put into a proper train, and then left to itself. Fixed rules cannot be given, it must depend on the nature and strength of the understanding; and those who observe it best can tell what kind of cultivation will improve it. The mind is not, cannot be created by the teacher, though it may be cultivated, and its real powers found out.[32]

As Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, despite the similarity of its themes, is not just an early draft of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, so neither, despite the debt it owes to Locke, is it a simple rewriting of ideas derived from Some Thoughts Concerning Education. The cornerstone of Wollstonecraft's pedagogy, as mentioned previously, was her distrust of parents, or of people in general: "Most women", she writes, "and men too, have no character at all".[33] The statement "most women have no character at all" is in fact an echo of a line from Pope;[34] it would be interesting to know whether or not Wollstonecraft was aware of Pope's statement (she does not acknowledge that she was quoting), for if she was, her own statement, with its additional rider of "and men too", could be read as a subtle altering of the first meaning, a feminist answer to the misanthropic poet, an answer quite in character with Wollstonecraft's own views. In any case, the remark reflects an attitude that is not conducive to placing trust in parents' discretionary powers. While Wollstonecraft agreed with Locke in general, she was more inclined to stress his remarks on how parents must behave than on how children should obey, and she was not nearly so sure as he that mistakes in education arose more from want of knowledge than want of concern. Not that she thought that parents willfully hurt their children, but rather that they, themselves the products of misguided educations, were in general too caught up in their own passions to have either time or energy to care very deeply for anyone but themselves. On this point, she was more pessimistic than Locke, and it was a pessimism that was at the heart of her educational beliefs and shaped the form they would take.

Wollstonecraft, however, stressed the determinism implicit in Locke's views less than he himself did, and here she revealed her basic optimism. While Locke referred to the "incorrigible taint"[35] left by a faulty education, Wollstonecraft agreed that "as it is, when reason gains some strength, she has mountains of rubbish to remove",[36] but argued that

> Very frequently, when the education has been neglected, the mind improves itself, if it has leisure for reflection, and experience to reflect on.[37]

Thus, her pessimism was counteracted by an optimism, a belief that damage did not have to be irrevocable; certainly it would have been better if parents had done the job properly in the first place, but if not, all was not yet lost, and Wollstonecraft's educational theory was directed as much towards the woman educating herself as to the mother educating her daughter. Moreover, in applying the rationale for education provided in Locke's Thoughts to women, Wollstonecraft turned Lockean theory if not to a new purpose certainly to a new topic.

On the topic of women, Locke had remained non-committal, contending himself with ambiguous and rather vague statements such as

> And although greater regard be to be had to beauty in the daughters; yet I will take the liberty to say that the more they are in the air, without prejudice to their faces, the stronger and healthier they will be; and the nearer they come to the hardships of their brothers in their education, the greater advantage will they receive from it all the remaining part of their lives.[38]

or

> ... the principal aim of my discourse is, how a young gentleman should be brought up from his infancy, which in all things will not so perfectly suit the education of daughters; though where the difference of sex requires different treatment, 'twill be no hard matter to distinguish.[39]

This was the kind of ambiguity Wollstonecraft appreciated, for it could be used as a justification for doing exactly what she had intended to do in the first place. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* makes it clear Wollstonecraft did not discern *any* area of childhood wherein the difference of sex required different treatment; consequently, her book recommends that girls should be reared along the lines laid down by Locke in his treatise on a young gentleman's education. Moreover, Wollstonecraft also seems to have assumed that sex made no difference to mind, that women learned in exactly the same ways as did men, and that their capacities for observation, reflection, and reason followed the same rules; thus she was free to apply the Lockean theory of the human mind to the structuring of women's education and thus to redirect the intent and purpose of the education commonly recommended for eighteenth-century women.

As Locke's educational philosophy denies the predominance of nature in forming the character, postulating instead a character largely determined by experience and reason, so too does his epistemology reject a mind stocked with innate ideas in favour of a mind "fitted to receive the impressions made on it either through the senses by outward objects, or by its own operations when it reflects on them".[40] This mind could neither create nor destroy simple ideas, but its active powers--combination, comparison, and abstraction--could produce an infinite variety of complex ideas out of the simple ones furnished by either sensation or reflection. The basis of all knowledge thus was experience. To have knowledge without it was a contradiction in terms. And it followed that the more sense perceptions one had had, the more facts one had had access to, the more of life one had observed, the more exercised the internal powers of the mind would be, the more one would know and the better one's judgments (both practical and moral) would be:

> All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all that good extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote speculations it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those ideas which sense or reflection has offered for its contemplation.[41]

Wollstonecraft's Thoughts recommends two things above all others, and it recommends them for women: strengthening the mind and learning from experience. "Above all, try to teach them to combine their ideas. ... I wish them to be taught to think": in advising women be taught to think, rather than obey, and in insisting they learn to combine their ideas and to strengthen the habit of reflection, Wollstonecraft's book recommends the internal powers of women's minds be trained for activity, so that the mind would "have some resource in itself". In so recommending, Thoughts reveals its author's belief that a woman's mind, like a man's, was capable of self-reliance and independent morality. Similarly, the book's frequent comments to the effect that pain or misfortune or even errors of judgment are to be "thankfully ranked amongst the choicest blessings of life, when we are not under their immediate pressure" is not conventional moralistic religion, but the creed of the empiricist, who believes the value of experience to be not the present pain or pleasure it conveys, but the knowledge it grants. And Thoughts goes on to argue that, to the degree women's minds did not seem to have the range or power of men's, the cause, and the cure, might well lie in the restricted nature of their experience.[42]

Experience is in fact the concept most frequently and generally used in Wollstonecraft's Thoughts,[43] and it is applied to the education of women to argue that the desire to protect feminine innocence and delicacy, by restricting women's experience, is misguided and serves only to weaken the mind, as it inevitably weakens the basis of knowledge. Accepting Locke's maxim of a "sound mind in a sound body"[44] as appropriate for both sexes, Wollstonecraft had no sympathy with the deliberate cultivation of weakness in women, and her judgment on the fashionable woman of the day is voiced with sharp contempt:

> ... though she lives many years she is still
> a child in understanding, and of so little use
> to society, that her death would scarcely be
> observed.[45]

To restrict experience was to cultivate weakness, and on principle Wollstonecraft was against the polishing and refining of women to the point where, having little or no knowledge of the real world, they became unfit to govern themselves. In a more pragmatic vein, she also argues that not only did such a protective policy prevent women from improving their minds but it did not result in innocence and delicacy but in a prudishness and an ignorance which may have fitted women for the role of romantic heroine, but left them totally unprepared for marriage, sex, and motherhood and equally unprepared to deal with the world should they find themselves evicted, for any reason, from the limited sphere of the family. Thus, Thoughts concludes that

> When habits are fixed, and a character in some measure formed, the entering into the busy world, so far from being dangerous, is useful.[46]

It was, for the eighteenth century, a radical argument, but Wollstonecraft was not yet ready to follow the train of her thought to its logical conclusion:

> Women are said to be the weaker vessel, and many are the miseries which this weakness brings on them. Men have in some respects very much the advantage. If they have a tolerable understanding, it has a chance to be cultivated. They are forced to see human nature as it is, and are not left to dwell on the pictures of their own imaginations. Nothing, I am sure, calls forth the faculties so much as the being obliged to struggle with the world; and this is not a woman's province in a married state. Her sphere of action is not large, and if she is not taught to look into her own heart, how trivial are her occupations and pursuits! What little arts engross and narrow her mind! "Cunning fills up the mighty void of sense;" and cares, which do not improve the heart or understanding, take up her attention. Of course, she falls a prey to childish anger, and silly capricious humors, which render her rather insignificant than vicious.[47]

In spite of its argument that experience is necessary to knowledge, Thoughts does not recommend that women challenge the barriers to professional or social participation enforced by eighteenth-century attitudes towards women. Instead, it encourages women to develop their minds in a manner compatible with a reasonable and realistic accommodation to their society. Experience and knowledge can be gained by turning the mind inwards, by closely observing and reflecting upon the internal life, and in fact to keep the mind alive in a restricted environment this must be done, or so the book argues. Thus, women's education becomes at once more complex and more personal than men's, and Locke's definition of the mind is used to justify not only the concentration upon personal experience but the revelation of it in women's writing.

Personal revelation was not so much intended to enable the reader to learn by the writer's experience (although this might be considered an added advantage) as to provide an example of the process by which behavior, thoughts, and emotions could be observed, reflected upon, and analyzed. It was intended, in other words, to be a paradigm of how the mind might strengthen its internal powers and increase its stock of knowledge by making good use of whatever experience was available. If the writer was to exemplify such a process, she would, of course, have to use her own experience, have to write about what she knew first hand, what she knew best. Thoughts attempts to do this, and the attempt--complete with implicit philosophical justification--accounts for what biographers have taken to be the undue display of Wollstonecraft's own emotions and circumstances in a book intended to educate girls.

Thoughts on the Education of Daughters is a rather remarkable first book, one that, to some degree, justifies Eleanor Flexner's assertion that Wollstonecraft "was arguing without precedent, at a time when the mere existence of a woman's mind was not only in question, but was of no interest to anyone, women included".[48] In the light of her later work, it is perhaps even more significant that in Thoughts Wollstonecraft argues the existence of women's minds with amazing unselfconsciousness; rather than expecting the book to cause controversy, she appears to think that anyone of reflection or experience will not only agree with her but find her reasoning self-evident.

While Thoughts' conclusions were revolutionary by implication, Wollstonecraft did not spell the implications out for her readers, and her use of Locke's pedagogy and the conventions of the woman's book and her stress on realistic accommodation meant that her conclusions could be seen as part of the voluminous criticism produced around women's education by any number of writers. In truth, the conclusions themselves were not so different: Thoughts is an eighteenth-century book. If its tone is too gloomy for some modern tastes, the book is by and large the one representative example of Wollstonecraft's early work to meet with the general approbation of eighteenth- and twentieth-century critics alike. This is not particularly surprising: its balanced judgments on the treatment of children, its pithy tough-mindedness, its basic coherence and stylistic directness make the book witty, thought-provoking, and entertaining. Her next work would make use of the same themes--exploiting them with greater ambition but with less care--and would not fare so well with either her century or our own. But the most striking thing about a comparison between the two books, written only a year apart from one another--was the way in which the realistic accommodation of Thoughts would give way to the romantic rebellion of Mary and would do so despite the predominance of many of the same themes.

Mary, A Fiction: Failed Genius

Mary Wollstonecraft's first book had been written to supplement her income, but its success[49] stimulated her ambition, as well as her desire for financial independence, and her second book, Mary, A Fiction, written in 1787 and published in 1788, betrays a self-conscious search for artistic power and originality. Tompkins remarks that Mary reads more like "notes for a novel rather than the novel itself",[50] and it must be admitted that by any standard the book is a failure. It is, nonetheless, an interesting failure, and one which reveals a self-instructed mind struggling to fit the religious, social, and aesthetic issues of the day into a psychological theory that would encompass and explain the development of a woman's mind.

Because its intended topic is the development of mind, Mary is forced, first, to assume the universality of laws which explain the workings of the human mind in general and, second, to postulate the existence of woman's mind which, like man's, must work in accordance with natural laws. Wollstonecraft justified the second of these assumptions in her Advertisement to the book by recourse to the willing suspension of disbelief which is a fiction's prerogative; Mary, A Fiction, she says, is an attempt

> ... to develop a character different from those generally portrayed. This woman is neither a Clarissa, a Lady G-, nor a Sophie. ... In an artless tale, without episodes, the mind of a woman, who has thinking powers is displayed. The female organs have been thought too weak for this arduous employment; and experience seems to justify the assertion. Without arguing physically about possibilities--in a fiction, such a being may be allowed to exist; whose grandeur is derived from the operations of its own faculties, not subjugated to opinion; but drawn by the individual from the original source.[51]

The book does not, however, live up to its Advertisement: its intention is to create a heroine who thinks for herself, but neither its plot nor its characterization works to this end. The plot (despite the fact that it was based on incidents from Wollstonecraft's own life) is improbable and unconvincing; the heroine, silly and pretentious, and the reader unconvinced of her intellectual powers (despite frequent allusions to the operations of her mind and constant references to her "genius") and equally unconvinced of her emotional susceptibility (despite obvious pains to paint her as a woman who feels things deeply). Despite its author's ambitions for it, Mary remains a typical creation of its time, displaying what Tompkins calls "the great weakness of the eighteenth-century novel, the disconnection between character and action".[52]

As all the despites in the above paragraph indicate, this was not what Wollstonecraft had in mind, and indeed this is the problem, for all that is truly interesting in the novel proceeds (too obviously for fiction) from the mind of the author, not the character. Wollstonecraft could neither separate herself from, nor identify herself with, her character to the degree required to produce a creative fusion of imagination and reality, a character that the reader can both believe in and care about. Wollstonecraft's biographers typically attribute this flaw in Mary to its author's personality: Mary is, they assert, not a novel, but an autobiography, and not an honest one at that, based as it is on wish-fulfillment, fantasy, and revenge; Wollstonecraft, in their opinion, unconsciously reveals herself through her prose and is discovered to be a lonely child indulging her confessional and sentimental tendencies in the worst tradition of the woman's novel to purge the terrors of her childhood.

Mary has not in general fared well with critics; nor can it be said to have done much better with the reading public, as the second edition did not appear until 1976, almost two hundred years after the first, and would not have appeared even then if its author had not happened to be the same woman who wrote the Vindications. Even Wollstonecraft seems to have repented the impulse to publish Mary, for in 1797 she referred to it as a "crude production" which she did not "very willingly put in the way of people whose good opinion, as a writer, I wish for ... indeed, it seems to me such an imperfect sketch that I seldom think of it".[53]

The common judgment of Mary as an inferior piece of work cannot be faulted. Nonetheless, the reasons to which its failure is generally ascribed are wrong. It does not flounder because its author was indulging in purgative therapy but because she was indulging in philosophy, not because she was telling her own story (which she wasn't) but because she was merely using it to build a philosophical framework in which the story itself is constantly and blatantly subordinated to the ideas she wished to explore. The degree to which Mary abstracts the detail and variety of personal experience, the degree to which it makes it apparent that its author herself is not interested in the story but only in the conclusions she can draw from it, the way in which it argues rather than demonstrates its heroine's genius--these are Mary's real flaws, and while they are serious ones for fiction, they proceed less from any emotional or confessional tendencies on the part of its author than from her intellectual ambition.

Mary is supposed to be a book about a female genius whose powers of mind are very nearly destroyed because her education has not prepared her to deal with the other component of her genius--the ability to feel. It was supposed to be a story about self-division, a "fiction" which would satirize and expose the dangers of the typical woman's "novel". Instead, it becomes yet another woman's novel, not a book *about* sentimentality and self-division, but a book which *is* sentimental on the one hand and philosophical on the other, a book which *is* self-divided. Wollstonecraft's book, rather than its heroine, becomes in fact an example, a demonstration, of the dangers and the failures of genius that it was intended to explore: for as its heroine gives way to love only to discover the pathology of love, so too does its author give way to ambition only to discover ambivalence and confusion.

Given the gap between *Mary*'s intentions and its achievements, it is not surprising that the complexity of its ideas has been largely underrated. Fruitful work could be done in examining Wollstonecraft's debt in *Mary* to Locke, Rousseau, Hartley, Price, Smith, Hutcheson, Blair, and Usher, among others, and it is perhaps the number and range of her "sources" or "influences" that make Wollstonecraft's *Mary* difficult and demanding as intellectual history and dismal as literature. *Mary* was for Wollstonecraft a deliberate attempt to recreate the conflict of ideas about woman, art, morals, and knowledge that typified her period, and in attempting to capture and define the intellectual and emotional conflicts of an era, in attempting to write a philosophical novel of the highest order, she attempted too much too soon.

Critical Response: Absolute Failure or Comparative Success

Mary, A Fiction, largely because of what it is supposed to reveal about Mary Wollstonecraft's life, has, for one of her early works, received a relatively disproportionate amount of critical attention. Most of this attention, as mentioned above, has come from Wollstonecraft's biographers and most of them, although they make extensive use of what they believe to be its autobiographical factual content, dislike the book and see it to one degree or another as evidence of its author's neurotic and morbid nature. There are, however, exceptions to this rule, and not all Wollstonecraft critics have dismissed the book as an absolute failure.

The first of these exceptions is G.R. Stirling Taylor, who believes Mary to be a failure as a novel, but one which provides "innumerable signs that the author had got beyond the limitation of the average mind",[54] although he neither explains nor elaborates on this judgment. Taylor's comments cannot, however, really be taken as a contradiction of the general conclusion that the book is the product of neurosis, for unlike most of her biographers he is perfectly at ease with the notion of Wollstonecraft as a pathologically morbid genius; his interpretation works on the same premise as the common one, differing largely in the value judgment he places on mental instability, for he sees pathology as a more than fair price for genius.

William Godwin, on the other hand, was one of the more severe of Wollstonecraft's literary critics; he had little patience with her fondness for rapid composition, her peculiar brand of logic, or her religious faith, and he liked only two of her books without reservation. Mary was one of the two, and of it he says:

> This little work, if Mary had never produced any thing else, would serve, with persons of true taste and sensibility, to establish the eminence of her genius. The story is nothing. He that looks into the book only for incident, will probably lay it down with disgust. But the feelings are of the truest and most exquisite class; every circumstance is adorned with that species of imagination, which enlists itself under the banners of delicacy and sentiment. A work of sentiment, as it is called, is too often another name for a work of affectation. He that

> should imagine that the sentiments of this book are affected, would indeed be entitled to our profoundest commiseration.[55]

Godwin may, of course, have been speaking comparatively when he concluded Mary was the product of genius. This interpretation of his remarks is substantiated by his comparison of the true sentiment expressed in Mary to the false or affected emotions found in similar productions. Moreover, the theory gains further credibility by the fact that the most favourable reviews of the book are to be discovered in the work of literary historians familiar with the fiction of the period as a whole.

B.G. MacCarthy's The Female Pen, J.M.S. Tompkins's The Popular Novel in England, and Allene Gregory's The French Revolution and the English Novel are three cases in point. MacCarthy sees Mary as the product of a philosophical mind sensitive to human suffering, a mind whose prose portrays "grim patches of reality" and reveals "sudden glimpses of power which make it impossible to dismiss Mary Wollstonecraft as a novelist". Tompkins implies that Mary could have been a first-rate novel: she believes it anticipated Romanticism's concerns with nature, adolescence, and characterization through "contrasted sentiment or mental development" and stresses its "suggestion of richness and depth" which even though not fully realized is nonetheless, in her opinion, "felt to be real". And Gregory comes to the similar conclusion that, despite its literary shortcomings, Mary displays a power and originality that is atypical of the fiction of its time. It might appear, then, that anyone familiar with the genre of the sentimental novel is bound to find redeeming qualities in Mary, and yet it is clear that these critics (Godwin in particular) find more than relative value in the book. It is almost as if comparative analysis explained the book's weaknesses only to make its strengths stand out with all the more force.[56]

Wollstonecraft scholarship has been slow to respond to the suggestions offered by critics like Godwin, MacCarthy, Tompkins, and Gregory, and it has been particularly remiss in failing to attempt to fit Mary into the pattern of Wollstonecraft's thought as a whole. Again, there are exceptions to this rule. The first is Eleanor Nicholes, who (like Tompkins), argues that Mary anticipates the thematic and stylistic concerns of Romanticism:

> Mary drew much of her material from her own life, and some of the autobiographical elements in her work have been taken into account by her biographers. But there is more involved than the use of characters or incidents from her own experience. Her mode, her style, is intensely personal. There was the belief, upon which her practice was founded, that truth was to be discovered, or validated, by searching into one's own experiences. In this she anticipated much of the attitude and tone of the Romantic period, to which Shelley and her daughter belonged. Because the personal mode was so firmly established by this following generation we tend to overlook the innovations in Mary Wollstonecraft's work.[57]

Nicholes's explanation of the development of Wollstonecraft's work in accordance with Romantic values and her interpretation of Mary in these terms is intriguing, but brief, and it was not until Gary Kelly's fifteen-page Introduction to the 1976 edition of Mary and The Wrongs of Women that Wollstonecraft criticism produced a scholarly account of the place Mary holds in the evolution of its author's thought.

Kelly's analysis of Mary as an early Jacobin novel represents a new line of argument in Wollstonecraft scholarship. It is one which makes it clear what combination of factors would have allowed Godwin to rate his wife's novel so highly, for Godwin would have recognized in the form of the novel (based, as Kelly points out, on the theories of

Price, Hartley, Smith, Young, Locke, and Rousseau) a mind akin to his own, in sympathy with and attempting to explore what would later come to be termed the principles of English Jacobinism or the philosophy of necessitarianism. And it is a line of argument, more importantly, which for the first time brings the ideas, rather than the emotions, around which Wollstonecraft shaped her novel to the foreground. While Kelly sees Wollstonecraft's belief in the personal or the particular as a pre-romantic concern (and here he agrees with Tompkins and Nicholes before him) he insists that the shape or form of her novel is the "conflict between reason and feeling"[58] and as such is firmly grounded in the Age of Sensibility:

> She obviously identified herself with Rousseau, and ... she wrote to relieve her 'wounded spirit'. But writing a novel, however autobiographical, forced her to be more objective. ... To help in this task she summoned all the intellectual resources of an ardent auto-didact. For if the matter of the novel is emotional and autobiographical, its form is moral and philosophical, and displays the extent of its author's self-instruction. ... There is in fact a variety of autobiographical forms in the novel, including confession, fantasy, and self-justification, but all are subdued to its moral purpose. Using the language of Locke and Hartley, Mary attempts to illustrate the philosophy of necessity, as it was later expressed in the English Jacobin doctrine that 'the characters of men originate in their external circumstances'. ... The religious impulse to self-examination (many of Mary Wollstonecraft's closest friends were Dissenters) accords with the philosophical method of 'necessitarianism'. Mary reconstructs her mental history in an effort to free herself from the past and the 'association of ideas' which produced her excessive sensibility. Gradually she works towards a cure through imagination itself, but imagination channelled and chastened into a rational religion culled from the epistles of St. Paul, the ethics of Adam Smith and Richard Price, the theology of Rousseau's Savoyard Vicar, and the social philosophy of the French Enlightenment.[59]

Ultimately, Kelly reaches the same conclusion as the majority of critics: the work fails as literature; its intention was to demonstrate the dangers of sensibility, but in the end Wollstonecraft, proving herself a woman of her age, succumbs to the very dangers she is describing, and "the novel itself becomes imprisoned by its author's feminine sensibility".[60] _Mary_, he says, is

> ... a radical novel, and it traces the causes of one woman's condition to their roots; but it offers no solutions and apportions no blame. If it attributes Mary's decline to her sensibility, it attributes the sensibility to individual and social causes beyond her control. ... For Mary Wollstonecraft, as for Prévost, Rousseau, and a host of female novelists in the late eighteenth century, necessity too easily became fatalism. ... Many women in late eighteenth-century England took to fiction as imagination's escape from the impossibilities of their moral and social condition, but few admitted the fact that escape was itself a fiction. Mary Wollstonecraft rejected the conventional consolations of the artful happy ending, or the _deus ex machina_ in shining armour, but once she had rejected the conventional fields of female endeavour--marriage and the nurturing of others--she too could imagine no alternative in this life. ... for like Young she retreated to an imaginary transformation of present gloom into future glory, and rejected life for the traditional alternatives of the oppressed--religion, death, and the life hereafter.[61]

Kelly's analysis of _Mary_'s thematic and formal structure makes it apparent that Wollstonecraft intended to write not only a philosophical but also a polemical novel, that she failed in this attempt because she could not yet envision any alternative to the conventional consolations offered to women, and that her failure was not without value. The book in fact might be considered a success compared to the typical women's novels of the day, a failure compared to what it might have been. Much of the true complexity of the book's ideas would seem only to emerge out of comparative analysis. For our purposes here, comparing

Mary to Thoughts, and then to Original Stories, and attempting to assess the relative influences of Locke and Rousseau upon the women's tradition in general and upon Wollstonecraft in particular should help to reveal the peculiar place Mary occupies in Wollstonecraft's early work and also help to further clarify the peculiar nature of its failure.

Sense over Sensibility: Women, Women's Education, and the Influence of Locke

Mary is a continuation and extension of the themes of Thoughts, an attempt to place women's education in a wider social or political context and simultaneously to fit it into a philosophical framework which argues for more than either personal happiness or social utility. But as Wollstonecraft's ideas became politicized, they also became confused, and Mary has little of the clarity, force, or directness of Thoughts on the Education of Daughters.

In recommending a realistic accommodation to society, Thoughts had implied that reputation and integrity, or personal and social values, could be reconciled and were not by nature mutually exclusive. It is true Thoughts contains flashes of despair and a certain basic recognition that the process of self-education will be painful, but on the whole it is optimistic in a way Mary is not. It is possible that Wollstonecraft's growing awareness of the political and economic factors which controlled society strengthened her deterministic bent, thereby weakening her belief that training the mind to observe and to reflect on its own experience could undo the effects of early conditioning; alternately, while retaining her belief in the efficacy of self-education, she may have come to feel that social rules were so arbitrary, so contrary to both the moral and emotional impulses of human nature which led to virtue and to happiness, as to make realistic accommodation to them impossible. It is difficult to know to which of these explanations to attribute the gloomy pessimism of Mary's conclusion. What can be said is this: in claiming women's sensibility must be balanced by sense, Wollstonecraft was not only repeating the advice offered in Thoughts but was on sure and common ground; in suggesting that undue sensibility was the product of women's education, not feminine nature, and in recommending that women learn to think for themselves, make their own mistakes, and learn from their own experience, she was giving fictional embodiment to the less conventional aspect of Thoughts and in fact outlining what we may call the education of passion, and this was for an eighteenth-century woman dangerous ground, ground Wollstonecraft retreats from in Mary partly by the very recourse to fiction itself and partly by her refusal to make explicit to what degree the reader is intended to approve or disapprove of the heroine's conduct.

Intended to be a more complex and complete exploration of the thoughts she had dashed off for her first book, Mary does not in fact provide a very clear picture of its author's religious, social, or educational views and is on the whole not so much complex as complicated. Nonetheless, the individual ideas that underlie the novel (however dimly they may be realized) present clear indications of the evolution of Wollstonecraft's thought and the influences that helped to shape it.

Its debt to Locke, for example, is evident in the language used to describe the workings of the mind, in the importance placed on education and on experience, and in the thematic portrayal of the Lockean conflict between reason and passion. Locke's belief that a proper training in self-control could actually mould the individual's desires to virtue, thus reducing the conflict of life to the point where reason and inclination, or virtue and happiness, could peacefully co-exist without placing undue strain on the individual, represented an implicit optimism which Wollstonecraft longed for, but could never quite achieve. The idea accounts for a large part of Wollstonecraft's attraction to Locke, and like him she was (at this stage of her career) convinced that most human suffering was not due to external circumstances, but to the internal clash of conflicting desires or impulses. But because she was a woman or perhaps simply because she was who she was, she remained less sure than he about the possibility--whatever the education--of a relatively painless life.

This pessimism, or despair, had increased by the time Wollstonecraft wrote Mary, so while Thoughts frequently doubts the simplicity of a Lockean view of education, Mary emphasizes or stresses the doubts. One of the novel's recurring themes is the constant pressure generated by contradictory desires: paradise is defined as the time "when the obedient passions were under the dominion of reason, and the impulses of the heart did not need correction" and life is metaphorically described as "warfare" or an "arduous race" in which many are weakened by "internal struggle", conquered by their own "complicated emotions" and "betrayed by traitors lodged in their own breasts". So much for the peaceful co-existence of reason and inclination.[62]

Wollstonecraft's view is more inward-looking than Locke's and suggests the price of improvement is pain, but it is nonetheless essentially a Lockean concept of human nature. In Mary Wollstonecraft gives fictional form to this concept (first articulated in Thoughts) to demonstrate the internal conflict between reason and passion, to examine its relationship to right and wrong, and to explore the intricacies of a mind torn between imagination and reality, or innocence and experience. Mary makes it clear (in a way Thoughts acknowledges but does not actively insist upon) that the industry, patience, and resignation Wollstonecraft had extolled in Thoughts were not to be regarded as simple moral clichés easily attained by anyone with a modicum of sense, but virtues whose meaning and value depended on their being derived by the individual himself (herself) from his (her) own experience. When the heroine of Mary is told it is her duty "to submit to the will of Heaven", she regards it as a "trite consolation", and indeed what is supposed to make it more than trite is the process by which she will eventually come to the same conclusion herself. The point is basically a simple one. Virtue cannot be conferred by any external authority, as it can be attained only through active struggle; if the heroine were to try to avoid the confrontation between reason and passion and regulate her conduct according to the dictates of society, she would not be more virtuous, but merely less honest and ultimately, refusing to have profitted from her own experience, less wise.[63]

Thoughts had insisted women learn to resign themselves to reality and not retreat from it by prolonging feelings "beyond their natural course" to gratify the "desire of appearing heroines";[64] "a young mind", it said in another place,

> looks round for love and friendship; but love and friendship fly from poverty: expect them not if you are poor! The mind must then sink into meanness, and accommodate itself to its new state, or dare to be unhappy.[65]

And in Thoughts Wollstonecraft had also declared herself "very far from thinking love irresistible, and not to be conquered";[66] and yet she betrays an ambivalence on the topic of love and happiness, for some hundred pages after her defiant espousal of unhappiness in favour of dignity, she cries out "And yet we were made to be happy!",[67] just as the heroine in Mary is made to exclaim, "have I desires implanted in me only to make me miserable?"[68] Eighteenth-century women writers, as mentioned previously, were all too aware of the dangers of love, but fear and ambivalence rather than negating the compulsion of love intensified it, and no woman's book (then or now) could fail to deal with the particular and uniquely fascinating perils love presented to women. Like Thoughts before it, Mary is a woman's book, but it reveals an uneasiness with its own themes and an implicit criticism of them that is far from common.

Thoughts had attempted to justify a view of women's education based on the premise that women must learn to think for themselves; Mary demonstrates what happens when this is not the case, when women cannot or do not use their sense to balance their sensibility. Mary is an educational book because it believes that it was the lack of a proper or Lockean education that produced excessive sensibility in women and made them "creature[s] of impulse" and "slave[s] of compassion".[69] It is a typical woman's book, because in spite of its very good intentions it is attracted to the very dangers it purports to recommend should be done away with, and it is an atypical woman's book because it is less concerned with the dangers to female reputation or virtue than with the dangers to female sanity. Mary is, in short, a novel about the pathology of love, the neurosis that results when the internal conflict stimulated by love is too strong to be controlled by reason.

Mary's heroine is a woman who insists on her right to happiness, is reluctant to submit her passions to reason, and will not renounce what she knows she cannot have. Her mind is alternately described as "sick", "painfully active", "unhinged", or "unsettled", and the hero tells her bluntly that her "mind is not in a state to be left to its own operations".[70] The heroine, the author tells us, has "not yet learned to be resigned",[71] and while Mary (the heroine) realizes that she cannot "live without loving--and love leads to madness",[72] her mind is seduced by her own imagination:

> She forgot that happiness was not to be found on earth, and built a terrestrial paradise liable to be destroyed by the first serious thought: when she reasoned she became inexpressibly sad, to render life bearable she gave way to fancy--this was madness. ... the tempest in her soul rendered every other trifling--it was not the contending elements, but herself she feared![73]

Had Wollstonecraft not succumbed to her own ambivalence about the nature of the heroine and the crisis she was creating, she could well have written the first modern psychological novel, for Mary contains genuine flashes of what the twentieth century would call psychological insight, the eighteenth, knowledge of the human heart.

Wollstonecraft was not, however, as interested in writing a psychological novel as in using a Lockean model of the mind to construct a psychological theory which would explain the nature of women's intellect and explore the ways in which it worked in a society which assumed that women could and should not think for themselves. As it was obvious that such a society was not going to encourage or educate girls to develop minds they did not think they had, she was further interested in the process by which women might escape the force of social conditioning or at least gain insight into it and control over their own minds at a later stage of life. This went against the deterministic bent of Locke, who argued that in nine out of ten cases early education formed the individual's character once and for all. Locke did, however, recognize that there were a few individuals whose "strength of natural genius" would lead them to virtue and enable them to educate themselves "without much assistance from others".[74]

The theme of self-education played an important role in Thoughts, but in Mary it is predominant in a new way. While it may have been initially drawn from Locke's introductory remarks to his thoughts on education, Wollstonecraft's exploration of it was influenced to no small degree by the work and life of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau, influenced by Locke though he was, eventually diverged sharply from the Lockean theory of human nature and human virtue, thus providing the eighteenth century with a new dramatization of the conflict between reason and passion and new interpretations of the concepts of genius, sensibility, and nature.

Genius, Sensibility, and Love: Woman, Woman's Place, and the Influence of Rousseau

Rousseau's Émile, ou De l'Education (1762) outlines a system of education which is diametrically opposed to the main thrust of Locke's recommendations; yet, for all their differences in emphasis and methodology, Locke's and Rousseau's pedagogies are closely aligned, particularly in view of the end result they wish to produce. Methodology is, in this case however, more than technique, and Émile is a revolutionary and original work which to some extent justifies the argument that Rousseau is Locke turned upside down, for what Rousseau did was to take Locke's exception--the natural genius who will educate himself without much help from others--and make it the rule. Now, the child is not a blank slate waiting to be written on by his cultural experiences, but a creature of nature, full of innate propensities, individual desires--a unique personality.

Émile is often taken as the first statement of romanticism in educational theory; while there is little doubt that it was the precursor of the romantic view of the child, Émile itself is more profitably seen as the first pedagogical statement of naturalism, not romanticism. Ultimately, Rousseau's view of childhood has as little in common with Wordsworth's vision of the child running through the woods, glorying in his own innocence and freedom, as it does with Locke's insistence on the child's passive and receptive mind, only too willing to be moulded by adult values and attitudes.

Rousseau's Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761) was another matter altogether and may be regarded as a statement of romanticism proper. Moreover, unlike Émile, which directs itself to the education of boys and is concerned with the nature and education of woman only insofar as they relate to making a man's life more complete, La Nouvelle Héloïse was--at least in women's eyes--a book written for and about women, a book which struck directly at the heart of female concerns. It was, in short, a woman's book. And it touched responsive chords in women that no amount of reason could quell, for if women were capable of accepting or rejecting ideas in Émile one by one, La Nouvelle Héloïse admitted of no such simple categorizing. Many found themselves seduced by a scenario they intellectually disavowed: the power of love to dismiss obedient submission to duty and the rules of society.

The plot of La Nouvelle Héloïse can be summarized in a few lines: Julie d'Étange falls in love with St. Preux, her tutor; they cannot marry because she is rich, he poor, and her father already plans to wed her to another; Julie and St. Preux become lovers; she is torn by shame and guilt and agonizes over the duties she owes to her parents, to her lover, and to herself; eventually, she submits to her father's will and marries a Monsieur de Wolmar; Julies becomes a respected wife and mother, but her past haunts her until her husband, trusting to her virtue and constancy, brings her lover back into the Wolmar household as a close friend and tutor to the children; at first all goes well, but Julie is shaken by her recognition that while she will continue to act virtuously her passion for St. Preux is as strong as ever; she jumps into the river to save one of her children from drowning, falls victim to pneumonia or some such disease as a result of the chill, and dies confessing her love for St. Preux; all lament the noble and virtuous woman they have lost.

The book is, obviously, sentimental, but more importantly it is a book about sentiment. In Rousseau's hands, the conflict between reason and passion or duty and self-fulfillment becomes a romantic struggle, and the struggle itself, the suffering or the conflict, is enobling, the highest order of human achievement. No longer is reason to be the sole arbiter of action, and in Rousseau's opinion neither love nor madness, nor even virtue, is to be considered as a state which can be measured by external behavior or tangible realities or judged by reason alone.

Locke's exploration of the relationship between reason and passion cautiously brought forward the idea that strong passions and strong reasoning powers often co-existed, and insisted the former must be curbed without crippling the latter; Rousseau makes a creed of the idea. But unlike Locke, he argues that in the conflict between reason and passion the more violent feelings (anger, lust, selfishness) are more easily subdued than the tender ones. Thus, his Julie becomes a fallen woman not because of her sexual appetites, but because of her exquisite ability to love and to pity--because of her tenderness. Similarly, St. Preux goes insane not because he cannot possess Julie, but because not possessing her means that the best instincts of his nature--the desire to love, to protect, and to cherish--are shut up in a vacuum that condemns him to an inhuman sterility. Rousseau, in fact, goes a long way towards suggesting that if Julie had not given in to St. Preux's desire for her and if St. Preux had not loved her to distraction and even to madness they would not only have been less romantic but less virtuous creatures. It is the very strength of their passion that purifies it. And by the time Rousseau arrives at the point in the book where he begins to argue that reason and duty must in the end conquer passion, that duty to law must take precedence over duty to personal feelings, none but the most obtuse reader is likely to accept it as a denial or, even, as a chastening of passion. As Rousseau later made clear in his Confessions (published posthumously, 1782-89), La Nouvelle Héloïse was an autobiographical fantasy, one which, "welled from the deepest levels of his personality";[75] it was the product of his imagination, rather than his intellect, and as such left him at the mercy of a creative muse of whom he did not always approve. In many ways, the conventionally virtuous ending of La Nouvelle Héloïse is Rousseau's attempt to deny the ideas that shaped the first three-quarters of his novel, and it was an attempt that failed.

If La Nouvelle Héloïse does not conclude that feeling is the correct guide for behavior, it starts with that assumption and cannot be said to renounce it convincingly. By mid-eighteenth-century standards, the book must be judged as immoral; it was not only ahead of the avowed morality of its time, but against it. It was, however, a popular book, widely read and translated into English almost immediately, facts which suggest that its ideas were coming of age and public opinion was readying itself to receive them. Nonetheless, it was a revolutionary book--a woman's book which could not have been written by a woman.

No woman who had a shred of respectability would have dared to challenge the moral code of the day by defending a fallen woman or claiming that her passion enobled, not degraded, her, made her more, not less, virtuous. To suggest that virtue was a matter of sentiment rather than action was daring; to argue for the education of passion, to carry it to its logical conclusion, unthinkable. And yet, no woman could fail to be influenced by such views once they had been promulgated. From Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloïse the eighteenth-century women's tradition takes its note of strain and ambivalence in its attitude towards love and in its literary descriptions of its own sex.[76]

Rousseau, in some ways, did no more than crystallize his century's opinions on the nature and disposition of woman. For example, his view of woman's sensibility as her greatest virtue and her greatest vice was little more than an eighteenth-century commonplace. His embodiment of the idea, however, made explicit the fine line women were to walk if they were to be both womanly and virtuous, for he recognized, as most male writers did not, the intricacies and subtle interplays of the conflicting duties that dominated female conduct and gave words to the dangers and to the pleasures of being female. If he viewed the mistakes of sophisticated coquettes with the moralist's contempt, the intellectual's cynicism, and the protestant's righteous indignation, he was tolerant to the point of indulgence when it came to what he saw as the transgressions of innocent or artless passion. While he catalogued feminine weakness with the scorn and the thoroughness of a century that believed women could not reason, insisted the major feminine grace was "charming ignorance", demanded women's education be relative to men's to fit her to be his wife and companion, and argued that when a woman wished to "usurp" male rights or "to take the command upon herself, this inversion of the proper order of things led only to misery, scandal, and dishonour", his Julie is far from the pale and characterless creature the above summary of Rousseau's views on women is likely to convey to the modern reader.[77]

Julie philosophizes endlessly with her tutor, commands him to perform various unreasonable tasks, and when he dares to complain addresses him thus: "Your letter is to be pitied. It is the only characterless thing you have ever written".[78] It is not the modern idea of submission, and indeed Rousseau's portrayal of the ideal relationship between the sexes is complex--or at least complicated--full as it is of unstated rules and alluring paradoxes. It is little wonder women fell prey to his literary charms. His portrayal of feminine weakness is charming, and yet this is only half of the picture, for his portrait also includes more genuine nobility, strength of character, and variety than was usual in eighteenth-century descriptions of womanhood written by men.

To women, Rousseau was the defender of their sex, and they saw themes in his work that would not likely have been attributed to him by a male reader. As Ellen Moers points out, the connection between Rousseau and feminism can not be understood until Rousseau's work is seen through "the eyes of the feminists" and the connection between "feminism and loving heroinism" grasped. Moers is correct in her argument that the female-pupil/male-tutor love relationship that became common in women's literature after La Nouvelle Héloïse was based on "pride rather than humility", just as she is right in her assertion that Rousseau's theme, the theme women borrowed from him, was "the strength of sensibility". But to term it the strength of sensibility is to be unduly coy, for what women writers saw in Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloïse was the ideal compensation for having to renounce both sexuality and intellect: not only would they be loved and adored, but they would as well get to be morally superior. In the hands of women writers, the strength of sensibility became almost exclusively female and something very close to self-congratulation on their superiority to men and the male world. Rousseau had showed them the way to this, and as a group they repaid the debt by granting him a position of honour in their world; however much they may have been tempted at times to disapprove of his morals, his pedagogy, or even his prose, they respected, even venerated, his genius.[79]

Feminine pride is as a result a recurring theme in women's literature. Frances Brooke's Emily Montague (1769) provides a rather typical embodiment of that pride in its claim that

> Women are religious as they are virtuous, less from principles founded on reasoning and argument, than from elegance of mind, delicacy of moral taste, and a certain

> perception of the beautiful and becoming
> in everything.
>
> This instinct, however, for such it is, is worth all the tedious reasoning of the men; which is a point I flatter myself you will not dispute with me.[80]

Madame de Staël's 1788 essay on Rousseau makes a similar point:

> Women can at least express what they feel ... and that sublime abandon, that melancholy grief, those all-powerful sentiments by which they live or die—these will perhaps stir more emotion in the reader's heart than all the transports born from the exalted imagination of the poets.[81]

Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) describes a heroine who "by the mild dignity of a superior mind" and the "gentle firmness of her conduct" foils the villain (who, it should be noted, is a composite of all the traditional masculine values) by compelling "him to feel his own inferiority".[82] One of Mary Shelley's letters argues that the sexes are not equal, women are "better though weaker, but wanting in the higher grades of intellect".[83] And Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough's Mary Wollstonecraft, using the psychology of the late-nineteenth century and the philosophy of Spinoza, similarly concludes that male and female minds work in different ways--men's are more rational, women's more intuitive--but, and it is an important but, genius and originality are rooted in intuition, and therefore all great thinkers, men or not, have female minds.[84] The theme replays itself well into the women's literature of the twentieth century, and it would appear that when intellectual superiority is granted to men, something is taken in turn, and that something more often than not is seen in itself to be superior to intellect. Thus, women's literature, on the surface at any rate, is often anti-intellectual.

This is certainly true of eighteenth-century women's books, which rarely praise or value intellect as a character trait in either sex. These are moral novels, and they extoll virtues which are not strictly-speaking qualities of the intellect in the sense of reasoning powers or logical analysis. But whether morality be defined as a question of feelings or as the subjugation of passion by reason, there can be little doubt that heroines are morally superior to heroes in these books. Following the pattern of La Nouvelle Héloïse, women writers defined their sex by its sensibility, and idealizing "submission to preserve their self-respect", they turned emotion into the highest order of experience and submission into a "spiritual grace".[85] Women "voluntarily" renounced will, intellect, and action to claim more fiercely the prerogatives of their sex to a moral superiority based on an intuitive perception and an innate delicacy that were beyond--and in fact, above --reason.

By the time Mary Wollstonecraft would come to write A Vindication of the Rights of Woman she would have rejected these basic tenets of the women's tradition, and that rejection would necessarily be accompanied by a violent attack on Rousseau's views on women and on love. To argue the rights of woman, she knew, one first had to demolish the feminine mystique Rousseau had brought to perfection. Thus, in the Vindication Wollstonecraft would claim Rousseau's "unintelligible paradoxes" and "crude inferences" represented "the reveries of fancy and refined licentiousness" and served "to give a little mock dignity to lust" in the "artifical structure" which he had "raised with so much ingenuity". He was, she would say, "a partial moralist", who recommended "cunning systematically and plausibly", who recommended women be educated "by rules not strictly deducible from truth", who, in short, made virtue "an affair of convention".[86]

But even in this, her most concentrated attack on Rousseau's views, Wollstonecraft admitted his genius, the warmth and power of his imagination, the eloquence of his rhetoric, and the indisputable fact of his influence:

> All Rousseau's errors in reasoning arose from sensibility, and sensibility to their charms women are very ready to forgive![87]

Or, as she said at another point,

> He denies woman reason, shuts her out from knowledge, and turns her aside from truth; yet his pardon is granted, because [and here she quotes Mme de Staël] "he admits of the passion of love."[88]

Wollstonecraft herself, however, despite her well-reasoned objections, was not immune to the power of Rousseau's influence, a fact which she knew and turned to advantage in A Vindication, by modelling her rhetoric on his own and then using it to attack his ideas.

But in 1786, when she wrote Mary, A Fiction, Wollstonecraft had not yet come to terms with the importance of Rousseau's thought to her own; while the confusion and ambivalence of Mary are in part the result of her ambition, they are also the reflection of Rousseau's influence in the shape and intention of her novel. She intended to use the philosophy of Locke and the religion of Price to demonstrate the absurd consequences of following Rousseauan concepts to their logical conclusions; in other words, she intended to use sense to correct or to counterbalance Rousseauan sensibility, but her own response to Rousseau was too ambivalent, the force of his ideas, or his prose, too strong, and the delicate balancing mechanism around which the novel was to be structured became instead an artificial juxtaposition of two equally ridiculous extremes.

The Rousseauan Influence in *Mary, A Fiction*

Mary opens with a quotation from Rousseau: "L'exercice des plus sublimes vertus élève et nourrit le génie".[89] The quotation obviously must be taken as Wollstonecraft's own idea of what her novel was to be about, and it is clear that what it was to be about was inspired by Rousseau. It is also, however, clear that Wollstonecraft did not intend to copy Rousseau or anyone else, a point which her Advertisement to Mary is careful to emphasize:

> Those compositions only have power to delight, and carry us willing captives, where the soul of the author is exhibited, and animates the hidden springs. Lost in a pleasing enthusiasm, they live in the scenes they represent; and do not measure their steps in a beaten track, solicitous to gather expected flowers, and bind them in a wreath, according to the prescribed rules of art.
>
> Those chosen few, wish to speak for themselves, and not to be an echo--even of the sweetest sounds --or the reflector of the most sublime beams. The paradise they ramble in, must be of their own creating--or the prospect soon grows insipid, and not varied by a vivifying principle, fades and dies.[90]

Wollstonecraft's belief that truth was to be found in the personal and communicated through the revelation of personal experience was, as mentioned in the discussion of Thoughts, influenced by Locke, but her reading of Rousseau added a new dimension to the idea, and it is at this level--the level of conception or narrative theory--that Rousseau's influence upon Wollstonecraft was both permanent and profound.

The one thing Wollstonecraft admired above all others in Rousseau, and the one thing she never doubted in him, was his sincerity. La Nouvelle Héloïse, as Rousseau's Confessions would later explain, arose out of its author's frustration with the emotional limitations of his life: "seeing nothing that existed worthy of my exalted feelings", he says, "I fostered them in an ideal world which my creative imagination soon peopled with beings after my own heart".[91] As Wollstonecraft recognized, the power of Rousseau's work emanated from its personal or autobiographical nature, from the fact that its author wrote under pressure from his own emotions, pressure which was both real and immediate at the time of composition. The very immediacy of the emotions, however, created a philosophical rationale for the expression of them; according to Judith McDowell's Introduction to La Nouvelle Héloïse, the book is

> ... a glorification of the sentiments, an assertion of the superiority and importance of individual feelings. The intense delight in subjective emotional states is further enhanced because of this glorification and because, as Rousseau emphasizes throughout the novel, such states are revelatory of new truths, always vague but significant.[92]

The domain of passion must in the end give way to that of reason, but before such subjugation can lay claim to virtue, and not merely to coldness or prudence, passion must be acknowledged in words that do justice to its strength and reality. Thus, Rousseau built into the fabric of his novel a rhetorical theory that scorned the artifice of neoclassicism and insisted instead upon the language of the heart which by definition was, "loosely written, verbose, drawn out to great lengths, disorderly, repetitious ... you feel your soul touched; you feel moved without understanding why".[93] Sincerity, candour, speaking from the heart, speaking for oneself--these, in Wollstonecraft's opinion, were Rousseau's virtues, and he possessed them to a degree rivalled by few and articulated them in a manner that did exactly what it was supposed to do, for his prose left her moved without always exactly understanding why she was so moved.

The parallels between La Nouvelle Héloïse and Mary, A Fiction should, then, be clear. As Wollstonecraft's biographers are quick to note, Mary is a wish-fulfilling autobiography, a personal book written to escape the pressure of its author's emotions and the limitations of her life as a lonely governess who felt unloved and unappreciated. As Kelly's analysis points out, the book was personal by design, and like Rousseau's work sought to use the personal to discover the universal. Despite her response to Rousseau, Wollstonecraft did not intend to abandon Lockean rationalism for Rousseauan sentimentalism: for if she believed subjective feeling revealed truth, ultimately the test of that truth, for her, was objective reality. Thus, Mary tries to explain the universal nature of personal experience and is supposed to be not the story of Wollstonecraft's own life, but the biography of everywoman, for every woman in a given society or class was, to one degree or another, formed by the same basic cultural experiences. It is in this sense that Mary is a radical novel, a Jacobin novel, and what it is trying to make clear is a concept of the personal (influenced though it was by Rousseau) that is beyond Rousseau's and very close to Doris Lessing's twentieth-century statement of the personal note in literature:

> At last I understood that the way over, or through this dilemma, the unease at writing about 'petty personal problems' was to recognize that nothing is personal, in the sense that it is uniquely one's own. Writing about oneself, one is writing about others, since your problems, pains, pleasures, emotions--and your extraordinary and remarkable ideas--can't be yours alone. The way to deal with the problem of 'subjectivity' ... is to see him [the individual] as a microcosm and in this way to break through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general, as indeed life always does, transforming a private

> experience ... into something much larger: growing up is after all only the understanding that one's unique and incredible experience is what everyone shares.[94]

The Rousseauan influence in Mary is not, however, restricted to the general characteristics outlined above. Like La Nouvelle Héloïse, it was intended to explore and to reconcile the reason of passion with the reason of law, or the passionate individual with conventional morality, and like La Nouvelle Héloïse it ultimately fails in this attempt, because it is at least half in love with the very things it purports to be criticizing. But while Rousseau was capable of transcending and unifying the contradictions of his plot, Wollstonecraft, patently, was not and was forced instead to retreat to the simple and not very effective device of giving us two novels in one.

The first "novel" has already been discussed: it is the story of how a woman's mind is formed by cultural assumptions which force it to develop sensibility at the expense of sense; it is the novel of intention, influenced predominately by Locke and Price; and it follows Rousseau's narrative theory of art to demonstrate the absurdity of his view of feminine sensibility and nature. The second "novel", and the dominant one, belongs entirely to the domain of Rousseau, and it is the story of a perfect heroine in an imperfect world, a world wherein love leads to madness because the brutal and coarse laws of society are incapable of recognizing the higher reality implicit in genius and sensibility.

In truth, Mary's portrayal of the character faults of its heroine or the "mistakes" her sensibility may tempt her to commit can be seen as faults or mistakes only insofar as the heroine refuses to be victimized. Here, Wollstonecraft found herself torn between the eighteenth-century belief that the perfect heroine was above all else compliant, resigned to her fate, submissive to male authority, and prudently obedient to society's laws, and the Romantic espousal of complete and total defiance which was coming of age and was implicit in La Nouvelle Héloïse. Indeed, the heroine of Mary is the portrait of a heroine in transition: she is alternately obedient and defiant; most of all she is trapped, as was her author it would seem, between two views of womanhood, two ethical systems--between wish-fulfilling fantasy on the one side and a new, grim, and definitely politicized view of woman's reality on the other.

Mary, the heroine, is, as Wollstonecraft said of herself in a letter written in the same year as the novel, "a something betwixt and between".[95] She is described as a dutiful and loving daughter despite the fact that her rich and selfish parents have neglected her almost from the day she was born; she is awkward, uneducated, overly sensitive, and, dutiful or not, resentful of her parents' treatment of her and prone to expressing "contempt with such energy, that few could stand the flash of her eyes". At seventeen she is married by her father's wish and at the side of her mother's death bed to the heir of the neighbouring estate, a boy of fifteen; her marriage has been contracted to settle a business deal, but she submits to her father's will without a murmur, without, as the author says, particular "disgust" or "reluctance", because she has not formed a "prior attachment"; it remains unclear whether either the heroine or the author would regard a "prior attachment" as a legitimate excuse for disobedience. In any case, directly after the wedding ceremony, Mary's husband leaves for a tour of Europe, her mother dies, and her closest friend, Ann (who is not only poor but consumptive) is taken very ill. Shortly thereafter, her father is thrown from a horse, and he too dies. The dutiful daughter mourns her parents rather perfunctorily, which is better than she does for her dead brother (the favourite of her parents), whose demise is relegated to about two lines. What Mary is really concerned about at this point is Ann, and she determines to take her to Portugal in the hope that a warmer climate will improve her health: she writes to her husband to request his permission to travel, making it, however, quite clear she will proceed with her plan even if he forbids it. This problem does not materialize, as her husband cares not at all what she does. Mary and Ann go off to Portugal and almost immediately meet Henry, a sickly "genius" who does not have long to live. Unbeknownst to herself, Mary--always "the slave of compassion"--falls in love with Henry and comes to regard her marriage with growing disgust and revulsion. Ann dies, and Mary's grief overwhelms her. Henry attempts to comfort her, and it becomes clear that he loves her and she him. They cannot of course marry, and (unlike Julie and St. Preux) they preserve the proprieties and do not become lovers, but (like them) they incessantly confess, agonize over, philosophize about, and congratulate themselves on their mutual devotion. Mary returns to England; Henry soon follows; and she spends the last few months of his life nursing him. After his death, considerable confusion, and the passage of some time, she agrees to return to her husband (who now suddenly seems to want her back home) and diverts herself by caring for the old and sick and educating the young. She continues to take joy in the idea of her own death and subsequent entry into "that world where there is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage".[96]

By eighteenth-century standards, Mary's plot is relatively restrained and makes a genuine effort to internalize the heroine's conflict rather than relying on mistaken identities, strange twistings of fate, villainous guardians, or vile seducers. There is, however, little in it to convince the reader of what he is supposed to believe about Mary--namely, that she is a genius and that her tale illustrates Wollstonecraft's opinion "that a genius will educate itself".[97] The very notion of a self-educating genius appears in fact to contradict the structure of the novel as a whole: is Mary the story of everywoman or the story of the exceptional woman who cannot be expected to live by common rules? Mary cannot be said to answer this question, and its failure to do so is its failure as a realized work of art, for this is the central question at the level of the novel's conception. Refusal to answer it in the work itself reflects the author's basic and ultimately destructive self-division, an ambivalence which is directly traceable to Rousseau's influence upon Wollstonecraft's view of genius.

Part of the problem arises from the fact that Mary does not at any point make explicit what it means by the word genius and it uses the term in different ways at different places in the book. According to Eleanor Flexner, the eighteenth-century definition of genius does not exactly conform to the twentieth-century's understanding of the word as meaning uniquely gifted:

> In the eighteenth century the word carried other connotations as well. The New English Dictionary gives several alternative readings for the period: "Natural character, inherent tendency ... Natural ability, quality of mind ..."[98]

Wollstonecraft's use of the word, as Kelly points out, conforms at least in places to Johnson's Dictionary definition of genius as "nature" or "disposition",[99] an idea Johnson also expressed in the phrase "Every man has his genius",[100] a claim which is an accurate reflection of the way in which Locke used the word. And yet Wollstonecraft's comparison of Mary, the genius, attracted to the grand and the original, with Ann, the friend, drawn only to the picturesque, the pretty, and the beautiful and her corollary insistence that "men of genius" are a "rare genus"[101] suggest that for her the word meant, or at least could mean, more than natural character, innate disposition, more even than her own description of genius at one point as "native strength of mind".[102]

And this "something more" may be traced to her readings of Rousseau and Blair, both undertaken shortly before she wrote her novel. "I am now reading Rousseau's Emile, and love his paradoxes", she wrote to her sister in March of 1787 and went on to add:

> He chuses a common capacity to educate--and gives as a reason, that a genius will educate itself--however he rambles into that chimerical world in which I have too often [wand]ered--and draws the usual conclusion that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. He was a strange inconsistent unhappy clever creature--yet he possessed an uncommon portion of sensibility and penetration.[103]

Three years later in her reviews for The Analytical she would make explicit her opinion of Rousseau as a genius in the modern sense of the word: his mistake, she would say, was "the mistake of genius",[104] and she keenly resented what she would see as Mme de Stael's presuming to judge genius by ordinary rules, to level Rousseau's "original prominent features" comparable to "a sublime mountain" into a mere "beautiful plain"[105] to justify his errors to common minds.

It is unlikely that Wollstonecraft regarded Hugh Blair as a genius in the order of Rousseau, but she read his Lectures on Rhetoric and

Belles Lettres (published in 1783) with interest and must have been struck not only by the theoretical agreement between the views of the two men on the purpose and aim of rhetoric but also by the similarity between Blair's view of genius in general and her own view of Rousseau's particular genius. Blair, like Rousseau, believed that sound argument must be based on honest sentiments, on sincerity and genuine conviction; that sensibility or the pleasures of taste are "to be ranked among the means of disposing the heart to virtue"; that "without possessing the virtuous affections in a strong degree, no man can attain eminence in the sublime parts of eloquence"; and that the "fire of genius" was kindled by "the ardent sentiments of honour, virtue, magnanimity, and public spirit".[106] Only good men, then, could be geniuses. But Blair was more explicit than Rousseau in his definition of genius. Genius (for Blair) "always imports something inventive or creative" and can not only appreciate beauty but "produce new beauties, and exhibit them in such a manner as strongly to impress the minds of others".[107] It is, he adds, "proper also to observe" that

> ... genius is a word, which, in common acceptation, extends much further than to the objects of taste. It is used to signify that talent or aptitude which we receive from nature, for excelling in any one thing whatever .... By art and study, no doubt, it may be greatly improved; but by them alone it cannot be acquired.[108]

Following Blair, Wollstonecraft evolved a definition of genius which is beyond that recognized in Johnson's Dictionary and very close to modern usage: genius becomes "native intellectual power of an exalted type ... instinctive and extraordinary capacity for imaginative creation, original thought, invention or discovery ... achieving its results by instinctive perception and spontaneous activity, rather than of processes which admit of being distinctly analyzed" (OED). Like Blair, Wollstonecraft would appear to believe that while genius cannot be created, it can be improved and channelled by the rules which represent the accumulated wisdom of mankind. Both writers admit that such channelling or educating will likely reduce if not destroy the vigor of the original genius, but claim that a balance may be struck between natural genius and cultural wisdom that will in effect encapsulate the best of both.[109]

Mary, whose "reason was as profound as her imagination was lively", whose "tongue was ever the faithful interpreter of her heart", and who often--indeed, far too often--is reported as deeply impressing the minds of others with "her artless flights of genius", is, then, to be seen as a genius of this sort. However, her genius or special aptitude --like that of every woman--lies largely in her sensibility ("heaven had endowed her with uncommon humanity") which if not curbed by reason could lead to vice. But Mary is not just everywoman, for it is clear that she possesses this gift to a degree other women in the novel do not, partly because her education has been neglected and her sensibility has not been educated by sense but also because she is to be seen as special in some way.[110]

Such a view of the genius of sensibility, or alternatively of the genius of virtue, is, of course, not only very close to the modern definition of genius as something more than extraordinary analytical powers, something original, powerful, and instinctive which cannot ultimately be explained, but also to the classical pagan belief that genius "represents the native moral instincts of mankind as setting bounds to the range of sexual passion" (OED) and to the belief (characteristic of the eighteenth-century women's tradition) that sensibility was the feminine genius and the basis for feminine moral superiority.

"Sensibility", says Wollstonecraft, "is the most exquisite feeling of which the human soul is susceptible"; it is "this quickness, this delicacy of feeling ... which expands the soul", disposes the heart to virtue, and forms "the foundation of all our happiness".[111] Wollstonecraft's concept of sensibility, like Rousseau's, is vague--"it is only to be felt", she says, "it escapes discussion"[112]--but it is firmly based on the sentiments and particularly on the virtuous or tender sentiments, for like Rousseau Wollstonecraft believed that tender passions and paradoxically especially the passions on which virtue was based endangered virtue far more than violent ones. Violent feelings like anger or lust could be quieted by reflection, but "refinement and reflection only render[ed] the tender ones more tyrannic".[113] This point of view, put forward by the hero of Mary, reflects Wollstonecraft's own belief (expressed in her letters) that "sensibility renders the path of duty more intricate".[114] But the problem in the novel is not even the Rousseauan insistence that "without faults" there are no "great virtues",[115] not that the path of duty becomes intricate, but that it in fact becomes undesirable.

The book's tone glorifies passion and ennobles the suffering it causes, and in this it contradicts its own structural assumption that genius should be tamed--or educated--and suggests instead that while the aristocracy of birth is outdated, the aristocracy of feeling is about to come of age and common souls must be re-educated and elevated to meet the needs and recognize the value of genius. For Wollstonecraft, to be capable of only "lukewarm emotions" is far worse than to be guilty of the sins that arise from an excessive indulgence of the virtuous or tender passions, and this attitude leads her to paint even what she would have us see as the heroine's flaws in glowing colours: for example, Mary is described as being "sometimes inconsiderate, and violent; but never mean or cunning"; as a criticism it does not possess much force.[116] Mary's argument in favour of passion (ie. that "certain qualities [in Henry, the man she loves] are calculated to call forth my sympathies, and make me all I am capable of being"),[117] her announcement that she will not return to her husband, that she "will work ... do any thing rather than be a slave",[118] and her impassioned claim that she "could almost wish for the madman's happiness"[119] rather than be condemned to an ordinary apathetic life in which the "rapturous emotions"[120] play no part parallel Rousseau's "vindication of the idealism of the heart, making its inalienable rights the foundation of the social order",[121] anticipate the Romantic creed of defiance and genius, and deny the resignation to duty and to society which forms the structural backbone of the novel.

Wollstonecraft's portrayal of Mary's struggle with passion and her attempt to educate her native genius is very close to Rousseau's description of St. Preux's journey through madness; the real difficulty faced by both characters (if not their authors) is simply that they have no wish to renounce any portion of their special and extraordinary qualities - their precious sensibility is eminently precious to them both despite the recognition that it brings as much pain as pleasure. They are indeed arrogant characters; and if their authors do not sanction their arrogance, they seem curiously reluctant to humble it and bring the characters into line with the philosophical and moral contexts of the works as a whole.

In The French Revolution and the English Novel Gregory claims Rousseau, the "arch-Sentimentalist", was the first to so alluringly present and carry to their "logical conclusion" "the doctrines of Sentimental Individualism", based on the belief that "feeling in itself constitutes virtue"; in this, according to Gregory, Rousseau "exerted an influence in England which it would be hard to overestimate"; he created a cult in which "feeling" became "an end in itself".[122] Sense versus Sensibility became the theme of the age, and if Wollstonecraft, like other women writers, eventually comes down on the side of sense, she procrastinates too long in the realm of sensibility for her ending to convince. She goes too far towards suggesting that Mary's moral superiority lies in her ability to feel (not, as her Advertisement had stated, in her ability to think), and this dalliance leads predictably not only to arrogance but to egoism and sentimentality:

> But the flaw that so often vitiates the sensibility of the eighteenth century is its egoism; it is difficult to find a passage that is quite clear from this taint. Tears are too facile, too enjoyable, and the sensible heart is too much like an AEolian harp, designed to be susceptible and placed in the position where it will be most affected. One longs for a little toughness; one meets instead with complacency.[123]

In its sentimentality, its egoism, and its pretensions Mary is, then, a book of its age. But it is not the book Wollstonecraft intended to write. She intended to use Rousseau's concepts of genius, sensibility, virtue, nature, natural religion, and the sublime in conjunction with Locke's determinism and theory of the mind and Price's benevolence, social utility, and ethical theory, intended in fact to reconcile

Locke's Reason, Rousseau's Sentiment, and Price's Duty in a heroine who could feel, certainly, but who could also both think and act for herself. There are as many passages in the book to illustrate the influence of Locke and Price as those that reveal the influence of Rousseau, but the latter are more powerful and emotionally dominant, and it is clear that somewhere between their inception and their realization the ideas that shaped _Mary_ aligned themselves alternately with the intellect and the imagination and worked against, instead of complementing and enriching, one another.

The intended theme of _Mary_ is not the exquisite pains and pleasures of sensibility, but the dangers of fantasy. Wollstonecraft uses her own story in _Mary_, and the alterations she makes in it are significant. For example, Wollstonecraft herself was poor, Mary an heiress, and this is not, as has often been suggested, simple wish-fulfillment on Wollstonecraft's part. In the first place, Mary's wealth is a plot expediency which convincingly explains how she came to be married to a man she does not even know, let alone love, and allows the author to expostulate against willful tyrannical parents who marry their daughters to consolidate their property; second because Wollstonecraft wishes to explore the dangers of emotional indulgence that foster a dangerous retreat from reality, Mary must be rich, as such indulgence is a luxury, a result of leisure and financial independence, as Wollstonecraft well knew from her own experience; and third, Mary's fortune complicates the degree of her culpability, for if the rich have extra privileges they also, in Wollstonecraft's opinion, carry a greater responsibility to society as a whole, and should Mary leave her husband, she leaves her fortune, and in her own words, "in giving up a fortune, she gave up the power of comforting the miserable",[124] renounced her chance of being socially active and useful.

As the above example demonstrates, Mary's conflict between self-fulfillment and duty was not meant to be a simple one, and at the level of intention it has been carefully considered, its intricacies well-planned; but in the translation to words on the page it loses its force, as the real weight and originality of its author's imagination forsakes the careful balance intended by the intellect and veers sharply to the side of the individual's right to happiness. Ultimately, it is impossible to say whether it was Wollstonecraft's adherence to the Rousseauan creed of sentiment, her fatalism, her overly-ambitious goals, or her lack of courage in following her own self-analysis or her thoughts on love and women to their logical conclusions that undercut the intentions of the novel, leaving it confused and often incoherent and self-contradictory.

What can be said is that flawed as it is, Mary is a brave book in that it recommends independence for a woman, albeit an exceptional one, even in the throes of emotion, the neurosis, created by an illicit love. In Thoughts Wollstonecraft had maintained that the mature mind could learn from anything; in Mary she attempts to demonstrate it. If she had succeeded Mary would have been less of its age and more of ours; its faults may belong to the eighteenth century, but as Tompkins points out it was "designed in accordance with modern values" and "anticipates some of the developments of twentieth-century fiction".[125] Also, Mary is often said to have followed Rousseau's view of Nature and its importance to the individual's development and to have anticipated Wordsworth's. The ways in which Rousseau and Wollstonecraft have their protagonists respond to nature and in particular the way in which both St. Preux and Mary are made to see in nature the reflection of their own moods justifies the first notion; Mary's description of the heroine's adolescence, it is true, admits of comparison with Wordsworth's Prelude, but of the romantics Wollstonecraft's work comes closest in design to her contemporary and friend William Blake's view of innocence and experience being reconciled in a third stage of imaginative creation. Like Blake, she believed the individual must progress beyond the innocent state of nature (what she would some years later refer to as "Rousseau's golden age of stupidity")[126] into the world of experience and pain, and like him she had faith that out of that pain might come a new and higher reality. This for her was the true significance of sensibility and the meaning of the religious sublime.

Mary's attempt to create such a world view fails, and that failure must, on some level, have been apparent to Wollstonecraft, for she abandoned work on "The Cave of Fancy"[127] and did not return to her ambitious attempt to construct a moral philosophy that would truly integrate her aesthetic with her social and religious values until The Female Reader and did not return to the attempt with conviction and vigor until the Vindications. For the moment, abandoning her belief that personal experience and revelation of that experience were the most meaningful kinds of instruction, she began work on a children's book, educational in the strictest senses of the word. Original Stories was probably a commissioned piece of work; nonetheless, its unwavering espousal of reason, duty, and benevolence represent a reaction from the high ambitions and emotional nature of Mary. Moreover, it was not a return to the more prosaic tone of Thoughts, but a rigidly-controlled work, a totally new experiment.

NOTES

[1] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 8.

[2] M.W., *Thoughts*, pp. 62-63.

[3] M.W., *Thoughts*, pp. 93-96.

[4] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 56.

[5] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 12.

[6] See Tompkins, p. 46 and pp. 141f and Moers, pp. 220f.

[7] Tompkins, p. 46.

[8] Tompkins, p. 143.

[9] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 112.

[10] See M.W., *Thoughts*, pp. 49, 108, and 135.

[11] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 89.

[12] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 84.

[13] Sunstein, p. 114.

[14] Both quotations in the sentence are from Tompkins, p. 141 and p. 165 respectively.

[15] All quotations in the paragraph are from M.W., *Thoughts*, pp. 64, 65, 65, 6, 61, 62, 139, 126, and 127 respectively; also see *Thoughts* pp. 18 and 22 (for Wollstonecraft's recommendations on childhood curiosity) and p. 15 (for her remarks on punishment).

[16] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 118.

[17] M.W., *Thoughts*, pp. 26-27.

[18] M.W., *Thoughts*, pp. 11-12.

[19] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1699) in *John Locke on*

Politics and Education, introd. Howard R. Penniman (Roslyn, N.Y.: Walter J. Black, 1947), p. 229; hereafter cited as Locke, *Some Thoughts*.

[20] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, p. 229.

[21] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, p. 241.

[22] All quotations within the paragraph are from Locke, *Some Thoughts*, pp. 229, 245, and 245 respectively.

[23] All quotations within the sentence are from Locke, *Some Thoughts*, pp. 379, 379, and 376 respectively.

[24] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, pp. 237-38.

[25] All quotations within the paragraph are from M.W., *Thoughts*, pp. 5, 123, 5 and 68 respectively.

[26] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, p. 247.

[27] M.W., *Thoughts*, pp. 7-8.

[28] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 107.

[29] M.W., *Thoughts*, pp. 127-28.

[30] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, p. 238.

[31] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, p. 216.

[32] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 54.

[33] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 111.

[34] The line is attributed to Alexander Pope in Joyce M. Horner, *The English Women Novelists and Their Connection with the Feminist Movement (1688-1797)*, Smith College Studies in Modern Language, Vol. IX, Nos. 1, 2, 3 (Northampton, Mass.: The Collegiate Press, George Banta Publishing Company, Menasha, Wisconsin, 1930), p. 33.

[35] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, p. 209.

[36] M.W., *Thoughts*, p. 62.

[37] M.W., Thoughts, p. 94.

[38] Locke, Some Thoughts, p. 216.

[39] Locke, Some Thoughts, pp. 212-13.

[40] John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) in Classics of Western Thought, gen. ed. Thomas H. Greer, Vol. III, The Modern World, ed. Charles Hirschfeld (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Wold, 1964), p. 117; hereafter cited as Locke, Essay.

[41] Locke, Essay, p. 117.

[42] All quotations within the paragraph are from M.W., Thoughts, pp. 22, 48, and 74 respectively.

[43] See M.W., Thoughts, pp. 23, 68, 119-20, and 138 for some examples.

[44] Locke, Some Thoughts, p. 210.

[45] M.W., Thoughts, pp. 157-58.

[46] M.W., Thoughts, pp. 46-47.

[47] M.W., Thoughts, pp. 99-101.

[48] Flexner, p. 60.

[49] Thoughts was a modest success: Wollstonecraft was paid for writing it; the book was favourably, although briefly, mentioned in The Monthly Review; and was reissued at least once in a Dublin edition which published it, Fénélon's Instructions to Governesses, and an anonymous Address to Mothers in one book; as Wardle puts it, "Mary had begun to find a public, however narrow" (Wardle, M.W., pp. 52-53).

[50] Tompkins, p. 345.

[51] Mary Wollstonecraft, Advertisement to Mary, A Fiction (1788) in Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman, ed. and introd. Gary Kelly (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), n. pag. (her emphasis); hereafter cited as Mary.

[52] Tompkins, p. 346.

[53] "To Everina Wollstonecraft", March 22 [1797], Letter 307, C.L. of M.W., p. 385.

[54] Taylor, pp. 85-86.

[55] William Godwin, Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft (1798), rpt. of 2nd ed. (also 1798) introd. and ed. John Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1928), p. 42; hereafter cited as Godwin, Memoirs.

[56] See B.G. MacCarthy, The Female Pen, 2 vols., II, The Later Women Novelists, 1744-1818 (Oxford: Cork University Press, B.H. Blackwell, Ltd., 1947), 192; Tompkins, pp. 344 and 345 respectively; and Allene Gregory, The French Revolution and The English Novel (New York: Haskell House, 1966), pp. 251-53.

[57] Eleanor L. Nicholes, "Mary Wollstonecraft" in Shelley and his Circle, 1773-1822, 4 vols., ed. Kenneth Neill Cameron, I (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 53.

[58] Gary Kelly, Introduction to Mary and The Wrongs of Woman by Mary Wollstonecraft, ed. Gary Kelly (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. x; hereafter cited as Kelly, Introduction.

[59] Kelly, Introduction, pp. x-xi.

[60] Kelly, Introduction, p. xii.

[61] Kelly, Introduction, p. xii.

[62] All quotations within the paragraph are from Mary, pp. 53, 46, 46, 38, 63, and 46 respectively; compare M.W., Thoughts, pp. 49, 108, 116, and 135.

[63] Both quotations within the paragraph are from Mary, p. 26.

[64] M.W., Thoughts, p. 86.

[65] M.W., Thoughts, p. 74.

[66] M.W., Thoughts, p. 84.

[67] M.W., Thoughts, p. 116.

[68] Mary, p. 40.

[69] Mary, p. 7.

[70] All quotations in the sentence are from *Mary*, pp. 36, 56, 36, 9, and 38-39 respectively.

[71] *Mary*, p. 55.

[72] *Mary*, p. 62.

[73] *Mary*, p. 37 (her emphasis).

[74] Both quotations in the sentence are from Locke, *Some Thoughts*, p. 210.

[75] Kelly, Introduction to *Mary*, p. viii.

[76] Nineteenth-century women writers were similarly influenced by Rousseau; according to Moers, "A passion for Rousseau will be found characteristic of the great women writers of the nineteenth century, and in despite of logic" (Moers, p. 152). To support her opinion Moers quotes George Eliot's comment that despite the fact that Rousseau's "views of life, religion, and government" were "miserably erroneous" his "genius has sent that electric thrill through my intellectual and moral frame which has awakened me to new perceptions" (quoted in Moers, p. 152) and George Sand's referral to her response to Rousseau which she says was "alternating reactions of veneration, of terror, and of love" ("Letter on Rousseau", quoted in Moers, p. 153).

[77] Both quotations in the sentence are from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou De l'Education* (1762), trans. Barbara Foxley, introd. Andre Boutet de Monvel (London: Everyman's Library, 1911), Book V, pp. 373 and 371 respectively.

[78] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse: Julie, or the New Eloise: Letters of Two Lovers, Inhabitants of a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps* (1761), trans. abridged and introd. Judith H. McDowell (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), p. 55; hereafter cited as Rousseau, *L.N.H.*

[79] Quotations within the paragraph are from Moers, pp. 151, 157, and 135 respectively.

[80] Frances Brooke, *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), rpt. of 2nd. ed. (1784) by New Canadian Library, No. 27, gen. ed. Malcolm Ross, introd. Carl F. Klinck (Canada: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), p. 93.

[81] Mme de Staël, *Letters sur les Ouvrages et le Caractère de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, as quoted in Moers, p. 152, and reviewed by Wollstonecraft in *The Analytical Review*, July 1789, pp. 360-62.

[82] Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, as quoted in Moers, p. 138.

[83] The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, ed. Mrs. J. Marshall, 1889, II, 269, as quoted in Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough, A Study of Mary Wollstonecraft and The Rights of Woman (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), p. 120.

[84] See Rauschenbusch-Clough, pp. 120f.

[85] Phrases quoted in the sentence are from Tompkins, p. 88.

[86] Quotations in the paragraph are from M.W., V.R.W., pp. 144, 133, 145, 129, 128, 128, 137, 137, 138, and 138 respectively.

[87] M.W., V.R.W., pp. 145-46.

[88] M.W., V.R.W., pp. 161-62.

[89] Mary, title page, n. pag.

[90] Advertisement to Mary, n. pag.

[91] Rousseau, Confessions (1782-89), Book IX, trans. J.M. Cohen (Penguin Books, 1953), as quoted in Judith H. McDowell, trans. and ed., L.N.H., p. 4.

[92] McDowell, Introduction to L.N.H., p. 16 (my emphasis).

[93] Rousseau, his Preface to L.N.H., as quoted in McDowell, "Note on This Translation", p. 17.

[94] Doris Lessing, Preface, The Golden Notebook (1962), 2nd. ed. (1972; rpt. London: Panther Books, 1973), pp. 13-14.

[95] See Chapter II, p. 74, n. 38 and Chapter II, p. 71, n. 36 of this study for reference.

[96] All quotations in the paragraph with the exception of the first which is documented in n. 95 above are from Mary, pp. 8, 15, 15, 15, 22, 7, and 68 respectively.

[97] "'Spite of my vexations, I have lately written, a fiction which

I intend to give to the world; it is a tale, to illustrate an opinion of mine, that a genius will educate itself." ("To the Reverend Henry Dyson Gabell, Sept. 13 [1787], Letter 64, C.L. of M.W., p. 162).

[98] Eleanor Flexner, "Mary Wollstonecraft and Henry Gabell" in Shelley and his Circle, IV, 855.

[99] See Mary, p. 11, n. 2.

[100] Dr. Samuel Johnson, "Letter to Mrs. Thrale", July 10 1780, as quoted in OED's definition of genius.

[101] Mary, p. 19.

[102] Mary, p. 67.

[103] "To Everina Wollstonecraft", March 24 [1787], Letter 55, C.L. of M.W., p. 145 (her emphasis); Wollstonecraft's idea of self-educating genius, as this letter makes clear, was drawn from Rousseau and intended to be the theme of Mary (see n. 97 above). Mary's debt or connection to Rousseau and the degree to which Mary, the heroine, is to be seen as a Rousseauan kind of genius is made clear in the novel in several places: see for example p. 60 where the author says of the heroine "she rambled she knew not where" as compared to Wollstonecraft's reference to Rousseau "he rambles into that chimerical world".

[104] M.W., rev. of Letters on Education by the Reverend David Williams, The Analytical Review, August 1789, p. 411.

[105] M.W., Rev. of Letters on the Works and Character of J.J. Rousseau by Mme de Staël, The Analytical Review, July 1789, p. 360.

[106] Quotations in the sentence are from Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783), 2nd. ed. (1785), (Rpt. London: William Baynes and Son, 1825), p. 9.

[107] Quotations in the sentence are from Blair, p. 26.

[108] Blair, pp. 26-27.

[109] See Mary, p. 31 and Blair, pp. 27-28.

[110] Quotations in the paragraph are from Mary, pp. 54 and 58.

[111] Quotations in the sentence are from Mary, pp. 53 and 54.

[112] Mary, p. 54.

[113] Mary, p. 34.

[114] See Chapter II, p. 86, n. 61 of this study for complete quotation and reference.

[115] Rousseau, L.N.H., p. 136.

[116] Quotations in the sentence are from Mary, pp. 6 and 29 respectively.

[117] Mary, p. 39.

[118] Mary, p. 49.

[119] Mary, p. 52.

[120] Mary, p. 52.

[121] Rauschenbusch-Clough, p. 36.

[122] Quotations in the sentence are from Gregory, pp. 41 and 48.

[123] Tompkins, p. 101.

[124] Mary, p. 58.

[125] Both quotations in the sentence are from Tompkins, pp. 345 and 344 respectively.

[126] M.W., Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, (1796), rpt. ed. and introd. Carol H. Poston (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), p. 89.

[127] In 1787 Wollstonecraft began work on a sort of oriental tale entitled "The Cave of Fancy". Like Mary it was to be about sensibility, and its form was to be moral and philosophical, thus falling into the rather specific uses the English turned the oriental tale to (see M.P. Conant, The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1908)). It, like Mary, reveals Wollstonecraft's ambition to write serious art; it is less flawed than Mary, but also a less powerful and spontaneous exploration of the same themes. "The Cave of Fancy" provides several definitions of sensibility, the most expressive of which is the oft-quoted "acute senses, finely fashioned nerves, which vibrate at the slightest touch, and convey such clear intelligence to the brain, that it does not require to be arranged by the judgment" (M.W., P.W., IV, 135). "Exquisite pain and pleasure" (136) is again seen as being the portion of those who possess such sensibility, and they must use sense and religion (or active virtue) to

keep sensibility from being corrupted and turned into "sickly refinement" (124). The test, then, as in Mary, is to what degree passion (again exemplified in an illicit love) can serve to elevate the soul and not to indulge the senses, for as sensibility is opposed to sense so is it opposed to sexuality (although as Tomalin suggests the fine line between sensibility and sexuality is sometimes so fine as to be invisible--see Tomalin, p. 61). The protaganist of the first, and only surviving, tale in "The Cave of Fancy" avoids actual guilt in her attachment to her married lover (his wife does not understand his "genius") by adhering to her principles (see p. 154), but she is forced to recognize the nature of her delusion--"I saw through a false medium" she confesses (152). Wollstonecraft abandoned the "Cave of Fancy" long before it was finished; it is a rough sketch; its basic intention, however, is clear and that was to deal with the sublime and once again with sensibility in a moral and philosophical context. To this theme Wollstonecraft would return in her later work, but for the moment she seems to have despaired or at least to have doubted her abilities to handle the awesomely ambitious tasks she had set herself in both Mary and then in "The Cave of Fancy".

CHAPTER IV

ORIGINAL STORIES: A WOMAN'S EDUCATIONAL FABLE

The History of *Original Stories*

Mary Wollstonecraft's Original Stories from Real Life; with Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections, and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness was written and published in 1788. The second edition (illustrated by William Blake) appeared in 1791, followed by a German translation in 1795, subsequent London editions in 1796, 1807, 1820, and 1835, and Dublin editions in 1791, 1799, and 1803. By the early 1800s the book had run the course of its popularity and since 1835 has been re-issued only twice--introduced by E.V. Lucas and published by Henry Frowde of London in 1906 and reprinted by Garland Publishers bound with Thomas Day's The History of Little Jack in 1977.

Original Stories was not exactly a bestseller, but it was a relatively popular book, and, in comparison with Wollstonecraft's other early works, must be judged a considerable commercial success. It was probably a commissioned piece of work, consciously modelled along the lines of Sarah Trimmer's Fabulous Histories or Thomas Day's Sandford and Merton, which in the marketplace of children's books were the bestsellers of the day, and this may have had something to do with its success. Nonetheless, an anonymous reviewer in The Analytical, agreeing with the book's own title, pronounced Original Stories an original work, remarked on the "freedom and energy of expression" that characterized its use of language, and concluded that "the precepts and observations with which every page abounds, are evidently the production of a mind that can think and feel".[1]

The Analytical's opinion was not of course totally disinterested (Wollstonecraft was, after all, one of its own reviewers), but Original Stories at least did not give offence, despite the acidic tone of its preface which described in no uncertain terms the inability of parents to rear their own children. Joseph Johnson, Wollstonecraft's publisher, pointed out the imprudence of attacking the very group one wished to buy the book and suggested Wollstonecraft revise her introductory remarks. She refused:

> I cannot now concur with you, I mean with respect to the preface, and have not altered it. I hate the usual smooth way of exhibiting proud humility. A general rule only extends to the majority--and, believe me, the few judicious parents who may peruse my book, will not feel themselves hurt--and the weak are too vain to mind what is said in a book intended for children.[2]

The book was published with its original preface intact. But as with Mary, if the statement of its author's intentions was for a lady disconcertingly direct, the book itself seemed to satisfy the British reading public's demand that if women must write they could at least keep their theories and their stories well within the preserves laid out for women. As Mary could be read (and probably was, if it was read at all) as a conventional sentimental novel, so too could Original Stories be seen as a conventional product of the typically feminine concern with the moral education of the young.

While Original Stories was well-received by the eighteenth-century public as at worst harmless and at best useful reading material for the young, it has not in general made a favourable impression on those critics whose self-assigned task has been to evaluate Wollstonecraft's work as a whole. Godwin was the first of many to find Original Stories unworthy of Wollstonecraft's genius and distasteful to his own. It is its very conventionality he objects to, "the torpedo of mediocrity"[3] that in his opinion typified the work between Mary and the Vindications, and referring to these years he claims

> ... that nothing which Mary produced during this period, is marked with those daring flights, which exhibit themselves in the little fiction she composed just before its commencement. Among effusions of a nobler cast, I find occasionally interspersed some of that homily-language, which, to speak from my own feelings, is calculated to damp the moral courage it was intended to awaken.[4]

Original Stories is more conventional, more mediocre, than Mary in the sense that it is less personal, and Godwin may simply have been less interested in it because it told him less of his wife than had either of her two earlier books. Original Stories does not make use of the people or events that had coloured Wollstonecraft's life. Moreover, it does not reveal the Wollstonecraftian proclivity to self-analysis,[5] and in both this and in its rigidity it is markedly different from anything else she ever wrote.

The phrase from Real Life in Original Stories from Real Life does not derive its importance from Wollstonecraft's intention to use her personal experience as a governess to draw general conclusions about education. Rather, like A Fiction in the title Mary, A Fiction, it was designed to set Wollstonecraft's work apart from the province of romance. In Mary Wollstonecraft had attempted to use autobiographical detail and fact to curb the dangers of sensibility in literature. As we have seen, she did not succeed, and Mary is a romance. In Original Stories she approached the problem from an opposite angle by adopting an almost exclusively impersonal voice and by creating a persona who cannot be confused with the author: whatever else Original Stories may be, it is not romance, as Wollstonecraft understood the word.

Romance in Wollstonecraft's opinion was the kind of literature women most frequently read and wrote: the kind that conjured up false pictures of the world, incited the reader to indulge in copious tears and to luxuriate in sentimentality to the point where true and false sentiment, the real and the ideal, became virtually indistinguishable from one another. In Thoughts Wollstonecraft had maintained that

> Young persons, who are happily situated, do well to enter into fictitious distress; and if they have any judicious person to direct their judgment, it may be improved while their hearts are melted. Yet I would not have them confine their compassion to the distresses occasioned by love; and perhaps their feelings might more profitably be roused, if they were to see sometimes the complicated misery of sickness and poverty, and weep for the beggar instead of the king.[6]

In 1789 she would put the matter yet more forcibly: "Every production", she says, "that tends to awaken the opening mind to a sense of real woe is a public benefit ... a seed of active virtue".[7] Original Stories was patterned upon the ideas encapsulated in these two statements--one made two years before, the other the year after, the book's publication --and its purpose, as Godwin says, was to awaken the moral courage Wollstonecraft believed was necessary to deal with the real pain of life.

Without abandoning her Lockean position that pain was largely the result of an internal conflict between reason and appetite, Wollstonecraft began to expand on it, to define and give shape to the external circumstances that mitigated against individual happiness, by sharpening the appetites while simultaneously dulling the capacity for reason.

More and more, real courage came to presuppose a knowledge of reality, an understanding of the degree to which poverty, injustice, tyranny, and simple thoughtlessness inflicted needless pain and irremediably warped human sensibilities. Moral courage was thus for Wollstonecraft to some degree dependent upon intellectual knowledge; to ignore pain, poverty, disease, or corruption was false morality, because it allowed "selfishness or weakness" to masquerade under the name of "tenderness" or exquisite sensibility.[8]

Wollstonecraft had already outlined this position in Thoughts, where she had argued that feminine innocence would be only ignorance as long as it continued to be based on a complete lack of knowledge of the world. In Mary she had given fictional representation to the idea in a heroine who comes to recognize the value of conventional wisdom only by virtue of her own experience of the world. In Original Stories Wollstonecraft extended this position to her views on children: if children were to be educated to live in the world, to contribute to society, and to prove their love of God by imitating his goodness and charity, they must be of the world and cannot and should not be protected from its darker side. Thus, the children in Original Stories, not to mention the children reading it, are subjected to one grim scene after another, scenes meant to illustrate the moral consequences of poverty and corruption and designed to make the reader feel the pain that results from immorality of one sort or another.

In Original Stories pain is a teaching technique of the highest order: "The Almighty, who never afflicts but to produce some good end, first sends diseases to children to teach them patience and fortitude; and when by degrees they have learnt to bear them, they have acquired some virtue".[9] Thus, pain suffered by an individual is either sent by God to teach him something, as, for example, learning to endure physical pain teaches the control that will enable the individual to bear "the still more excruciating agonies of the mind";[10] or, it is needless pain, the result of the individual's own actions, and this pain, in teaching him to avoid it, teaches him to behave properly. Wollstonecraft persisted in believing that the guilty must suffer the agonies of a tormented conscience, that happiness could not exist without innocence, and that therefore the intelligent individual would in his own life act morally to spare himself pain once he understood the connection between correct action and comfortable feelings.[11] Moral education thus becomes a process of demonstrating to the child the causal or the real connection between action and consequence.

But it was not enough for Wollstonecraft that the child learn to act morally in a personal or private sense, for as a member of society he must learn, as well, to share and to alleviate the general pain, the pain of others. Thus, the second part of the moral education outlined in Original Stories becomes the process of developing a social conscience in the child. The pleasure and utility of benevolence must be demonstrated to the child, and he must be made to see that as a member of society and as a naturally social creature the common good must be at least as important as his own and that personal happiness is dependent on working towards this common good.

According to Godwin (and most of the critics who followed him) what is wrong with Wollstonecraft's view of moral education in Original Stories is not the argument itself, but the rigid severity with which it is presented—the "homily-language" which damps "the moral courage it was intended to awaken". The book is a collection of religious clichés and simple homespun moralizing, as a sampling of its chapter headings ("Folly Produces Self-Contempt, and the Neglect of Others", "Ridicule of Personal Defects Censured", "The Inconveniences of Immoderate Indulgence", "The Danger of Delay", "Trifling Omissions Undermine Affection", "True and False Pride", "The Folly of Irresolution", "Charity", "Idleness Produces Misery", "Resignation", "The Benefits Arising from Devotion") and the allegorical names of its characters (Jane Fretful, Mrs. Mason, Lady Sly, Mrs. Trueman, Honest Jack, Mr. Lofty) clearly demonstrate. But clichéd or not, Original Stories is written with a bite that alternates between pathos and satire, sympathy and sarcasm at a moment's notice, and its interest derives from its rapid shift of tone and the way in which clichés are pitted one against the other, to the point where it is clear that the author is attempting (if not always successfully) to recapture their original force and essential truth.

The real problem, then, is not the clichés in themselves, but the fact that in Original Stories (as in neither Thoughts nor Mary) this common-sense wisdom is unrelieved by either doubt or conflict. Emotions, Wollstonecraft says, are "implanted" in us "to preserve the species"; they "do not depend entirely on our will, but are involuntary", but Man (unlike the rest of the animal kingdom) "is allowed to ennoble his nature, by cultivating his mind and enlarging his heart".[12] Virtue is thus the result of a conscious effort of the will to overcome natural inclination:

> 'The term virtue, comes from a word signifying strength. Fortitude of mind is, therefore, the basis of every virtue, and virtue belongs to a being, that is weak in its nature, and strong only in will and resolution.'[13]

It was (and is) a common enough view, but Wollstonecraft's usual statement of it included and indeed stressed the nuances and subtleties of a struggle in which it was difficult even to distinguish the demands of reason from those of passion, let alone always to act in accordance with the former. Original Stories, despite its protestations to the contrary, presents a view of human nature in which reason and virtuous will seem to be effortlessly dominant and nature weak only in the sense that it lacks the strength to insist upon its own selfishness and greed in the face of virtue. Unanswered questions become a matter of faith in God, not a cause for agonized self-analysis or doubt. Right is too obvious, too easy, and, in a word, too Lockean: it is conquest without struggle, virtue without temptation, Christian strength without human weakness.

To the mere mortal--and it would seem to the critic who represents him--the triumph of virtue in Original Stories is so complete as to be depressing and, despite its title, definitely unreal. Godwin, the atheist and sceptic, could hardly have been expected to approve or to accept Original Stories's seemingly orthodox and apolitical presentation of religious education as the solution to the world's moral problems. Approve, of course, he did not, but his criticisms of the book imply that its faults lay less in Wollstonecraft's nature than in a temporary capitulation to the typical attitudes of their age towards children, education, and morality.

Few critics have been so generous. For many, Original Stories stands as an indictment of Mary Wollstonecraft's character: the rebuttal of nineteenth-century biography's vindication of her reputation by virtue of her warm and affectionate nature; the refutation of Godwin's fond claim that "No person was ever better formed for the business of education" than she;[14] and the demonstration of the absurdity of O'Malley's description (and others like it) of Wollstonecraft as a woman whose arrogance and self-righteousness perhaps "gave offence to grown up people" but did "not appear in her treatment of children" with whom she was "always sympathetic".[15] To the twentieth century (and in particular to that part of it influenced by the development of child psychology and by the permissiveness of childrearing techniques in the 1960s and 1970s) the attitudes towards children expressed in Original Stories seem not just harsh or traditional but downright inhuman.[16]

While modern criticism has acknowledged that many of these attitudes were typical of Wollstonecraft's century, it has been less willing than was Godwin to ascribe the faults it sees in the book to the age alone. Ralph Wardle, for example, explains that while Mrs. Mason (the protagonist of Original Stories) "strikes a modern reader as a heartless virago",[17] the book

> ... was not, after all, much sterner stuff than Sandford and Merton or The History of the Robins; in some respects it showed a healthier tissue, since it lacked their relentless opposition of the model child and the scapegrace. Indeed, at a time when "Sermons for Children" were generally considered to be legitimate "entertainment" for young minds, Original Stories must have seemed to many parents rather frivolous. And if they had been brought up, as many were, on James Janeway's Holy and Exemplary Lives and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children, it must have seemed downright insipid.[18]

Nonetheless, even Wardle cannot resist noting that Original Stories, product of its age or not, reveals that Wollstonecraft possessed "little real understanding of human nature" and "no sense of humor" whatsoever.[19] E.V. Lucas, who wrote the Introduction to the 1906 edition of Original Stories, finds the book and its author lacking not only in humour and warmth but in imagination and human kindness as well and says outright that its sole value lies in its unintentional depiction of the horrible state of slavery to which eighteenth-century children were subjected. His opinion was shared by The Saturday Review, who noted the 1906 appearance of the book, claimed it was "ridiculously old-fashioned", and argued that it "would suggest insanity in the writer" if written in the twentieth century.[20] Of course, not all critical opinion is as harsh as these last two examples, but Original Stories is usually unfavourably compared to Wollstonecraft's "Lessons",[21] and it is often argued that after she had become a mother she would have been incapable of propagating the insensitivity to children and their needs that is so blatantly advertised in Original Stories.

It is not, however, just the rigidity that Wollstonecraft critics object to in Original Stories, but also the conventionality of the ideas on which it is based. While the book's stress on reason and its portrayal of poverty are acknowledged to represent, at the very least, a departure from the sentimentalism of Mary, it is a departure that for most critics encapsulates the very worst of eighteenth-century political, social, and moral conservatism, just as Mary had for most of these same critics embodied the worst of the century's self-indulgent emotionalism. Margaret George, on the other hand, does not see the book as at all conservative and claims that it was "a rigorous exercise in the liberal faith" Wollstonecraft was acquiring, "a formidably pedantic tract intended indeed to form the youthful mind to rational direction of its every activity".[22] Similarly, Claire Tomalin argues that Original Stories gives one "the alarming feeling that the revolutionary eye of vigilance is already at work".[23] These are not, however, exactly compliments--of which indeed the book has received few. Emily Sunstein remarks that it is "a professional job of substantial originality", "far better organized and disciplined than either Thoughts or Mary",[24] but by and large its professionalism cannot be said to appeal to the twentieth century, and words like grim, awful, smug or self-righteous, hard, arid, cold, and heartless dominate the critical discussion of its tone, its protagonist and its author.

It is the book's main character, the governess-tutor Mrs. Mason, who most frequently becomes the target of critical resentment. And it must be admitted that judged by any and all modern standards, Mason is undeniably grim and moralistic. She also makes good sense, and it is, in fact, because she is no fool that her moralizing is so objectionable. She speaks the language of morality, the clichés of her day and our own, with perfect self-assurance and compelling, if disconcerting, logic. To explain to children why they must not be cruel to animals or even to insects she draws a simple analogy, one which can be easily comprehended by even the dullest child: "You are often troublesome--I am stronger than you--yet I do not kill you". When forced to kill a fatally-wounded bird, "she put her foot on the bird's head, turning her own another way", thus making it clear that if putting something out of its pain is not to be avoided out of desire to spare ourselves the pain of being responsible, neither is it to be enjoyed. Mason's stories are similarly to the point. Jane Fretful "loved no one but herself; and the consequence was, she never inspired love". Lady Sly is bitterly unhappy, because her indulgence in "malicious" gossip and her pleasure in the misfortune of others leads her to suppose all are like herself, thus leaving her suspicious and alone and unable to enjoy the comfort friendship could offer. The father who "not only neglected to educate his children, and set them a good example, but taught them to be cruel while he tormented them" ends by being neglected, in turn, and dies "in a ditch". The children in Mrs. Mason's care do not fail to appreciate the moral niceties of her stories: "Did you ever hear of any thing so cruel?", asks Mary after a particularly gloomy episode in which four children, their mother, their father, and even the family dog fall victims to social injustice and tyranny; "Yes", answers Mrs. Mason calmly, "and as we walk home I will relate an instance of still greater barbarity".[25]

Mason's stories, of course, illustrate the consequences of moral flaws, and more often than not they are designed to correct specific moral failings (or what she supposes to be specific moral failings) in the girls under her care. When Caroline, a vain and greedy twelve-year-old, makes herself sick by gobbling up huge quantities of fruit, tales of greed follow, not to mention a visit to the pig-sty. And when Mary, a chronically late and untidy fourteen-year-old, announces once too often that she will do something tomorrow that should be done that day, she is treated to the history of Charles Townley, a man whose procrastination caused the death of his best friend and the insanity of that friend's daughter. And, on friendship, too, Mason has something to say. Describing the friend we would all like to have and are not at all sure we would like to have to be ourselves, she says:

> I should not value the affection of a person who would not bear pain and hunger to serve me; nor is that benevolence warm, which shrinks from encountering difficulties, when it is necessary, in order to be useful to any fellow-creature.[26]

Not despite, but because of, all this self-conscious virtue and moralizing, Caroline and Mary, much to the annoyance of every critic who has reviewed the book, quickly come to admire and respect Mason and to desire her approval. The girls do fear her--"I am afraid of Mrs. Mason's eyes", says Mary--but they also need her approval--"her quiet steady displeasure made them feel so little in their own eyes, they wished her to smile that they might be something; for all their consequence seemed to rise from her approbation".[27] This is not nearly so unrealistic as it at first seems, and in fact anyone reading the book is in danger of having to endure the same transformation himself. The real problem with Original Stories is not that its morality is above a child's capacity (an objection Wollstonecraft anticipated in her preface to the book), but, on the contrary, that it is too well-suited to it and appeals to the child's need for approval in all of us. E.V. Lucas is perhaps the most severe of Original Stories's critics; yet his description of Mason is an imaginative testament to the strength of the impression she made on him:

> Since I have read this little book a new kind of nightmare has come into my slumbers: I dream that I am walking with Mrs. Mason. The greatness and goodness of Mrs. Mason surround me, dominate me, suffocate me. With head erect, vigilant eye, and a smile of assurance and tolerance on her massive features, she sails on and on, holding my neatly-gloved hand, discoursing ever of the infinite mercy of God, the infinite paltriness of myself, and the infinite success of Mrs. Mason. I think that Mrs. Mason's most terrible characteristic to me (who have never been quite sure of anything) is the readiness with which her decisions spring fully-armed from her brain. She knows not only everything, but herself too: she has no doubts.[28]

The reader may feel himself more in agreement with Lucas's description of Mason than with Wollstonecraft's view of her as "a woman of discernment and tenderness",[29] but the fact remains that where Mason is actively disliked, rather than simply dismissed, it is because her character stands as a moral indictment of all those who do not believe themselves to be capable of living up to her exalted moral principles and yet on some level believe they should be lived up to. Eighteenth-century feminine morality is simply less easily dismissed than eighteenth-century sentimentalism. Mason's reasoning can be deceptively simple, but one point comes through loud and clear--especially to the child--and that is that in the long run people get just what they deserve, no more and no less. And surely it is only the very innocent--or the very stupid--who can regard such a prospect with perfect equanimity.

Original Stories is the product of a religious moralist, a Christian who believes in divine justice and divine retribution, and it is inevitable that the reader who does not hold similar views is going to quarrel with its reasoning. However, as stated earlier, the book's impact does not rely on its reasoning, which is alone interesting in a book purportedly about reason. Its power derives instead from the cumulative effect of its literary patterning and its narrative voice: from the interplay of light and dark, from the constant contrasts between gruesome and wholesome; the contrasts between the sweet, plump, pink-cheeked, country babes and the dark, emaciated, diseased, gutter children, between the pathetic resignation of crippled Honest Jack and the unholy independence of Lady Sly's stolen fortune, between the quite genuine pathos and often openly melodramatic or sentimental stories and the coldly analytical framework in which they are placed, between the belief in economic and cultural determinism and the stress on individual moral responsibility and "just deserts".

Original Stories is, in short, an angry and effective little book.

Like all of Wollstonecraft's work, it is a balancing act, an act that, like all her early works, fails in one direction or the other to live up to its author's intentions of reconciling opposing positions. Seen in the context of her work as a whole, it is significant that Original Stories not only fails to achieve a balanced point of view, but seems to err on the side of a rigid, conventional, Christian morality which banishes the rights of sentiment and passion in favour of those of duty and prescribed rules.

Original Stories and *Mary, A Fiction*: The Search for Balance

Whether Wollstonecraft is expounding on the rules of dress and the manners of the gentry or exploring the profundities of religion or ethics, her basic intention is always to integrate various contradictory factors, to create a balance that avoids sacrificing either the "truths" of experience to the clarity of logic or the demands of reason to the morality of prudence. "Wisdom", she says in Original Stories, "consists in avoiding extremes"; in Mary, A Fiction she criticizes those who "comet-like ... are always in extremes".[30] It is hardly an original view, and yet the persistence with which she pursues it, despite repeated failures to capture or embody it in her work, is both unusual and complex.

Original Stories is at once a retreat from the unconventionality of Mary and a continuation of its themes. In terms of Wollstonecraft's overall intentions, both books are failures, since they are both extreme. Each book, in fact, contains two separate strains of thought which refuse to work together, but in literary terms the division in Mary is disruptive or destructive in a way which is not true in Original

Stories where the internal contradictions intensify, rather than undermine, the book's force. For all its moralizing, its unbounded use of cliché, and its "harsh" attitudes towards children, Original Stories is the better book. Perhaps Wollstonecraft's literary powers were gaining strength; perhaps the structure of the book (modelled on those of Day and Trimmer) provided her with an external framework in which to organize her thoughts; perhaps because Original Stories was less personal and far less ambitious than Mary it was also less complicated and allowed Wollstonecraft to say what she wanted to say without worrying about unduly exposing herself. Whatever the reasons, Original Stories is more competently written and imaginatively forceful than Mary.

Original Stories, however, not only shares many of the same concerns as Mary, but is, in fact, one half of Mary--the weaker half--rewritten. Of Mary's sixty-eight pages two-and-a-half were devoted to explaining how the heroine was to live her life after her illicit passion had been conquered at the price of her lover's death. As a whole Mary made it clear Wollstonecraft believed that religion and resignation were the antidotes to passion and madness; but the book did not give a very clear picture of what Wollstonecraft meant by religious resignation, not only because its heroine did not achieve it, but also because at no time did she even appear to be very interested in trying to achieve it: "She would boast of her resignation--yet catch eagerly at the least ray of hope . . . . she rather labored, indeed, to make him believe she was resigned, than really to be so".[31] Original Stories's Mason represents the ideal of Wollstonecraftian religious resignation that had been held up to the heroine throughout Mary--an ideal the heroine (over the author's objections, it would seem) constantly and forcibly rejected. Mason is Mary once Mary has "learned to be resigned".[32]

Mason devotes her life (as we are told Mary does after Henry's death) to the sick, the old, and the young. When forced to live in a loveless marriage, Mary is frequently overcome with disgust, while Mason is "weaned from the world, but not disgusted".[33] Mary has "a heart in which there was a void, that even benevolence and religion could not fill";[34] similarly, Mason has suffered misfortunes so heavy "that neither the beams of prosperity, nor even those of benevolence, can dissipate the gloom".[35] The parallels between the two women and their stories are striking, but Mason has one characteristic Mary has not, and that is independence.

Further, Mason's independence is seen as the direct result of her having achieved a state of religious serenity, a state based on resignation and achieved by reducing one's wants rather than striving to fulfill them. "I choose to be independent of caprice and artificial wants",[36] says Mason, and the contrast between her and Mary makes it clear that if love and passion are not artificial they are at the very least capricious and that reliance on a man's love instead of on God's, and God's only, makes independence impossible. The death of Mason's husband and child is a tragedy; but it is also both necessary and sufficient to guarantee her femininity--she is not a rebel like Mary but a victim--and to guarantee her independence not only from a loveless connection but from love itself. Her life is free of male influence, and consequently she is free to dedicate herself wholeheartedly to the educating of the young. Predictably, the purpose, the basis, and the goal of Mason's educational practice is independence, an independence grounded not in rebellion, but in reason, religion, and resignation.

An Education in Independence: The Influence of Locke and Rousseau

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Wollstonecraft would claim that she had always addressed children thus:

> ... your reason is now gaining strength, and, till it arrives at some degree of maturity, you must look up to me for advice--then you ought to *think*, and only rely on God.[37]

A survey of Wollstonecraft's early work confirms her own opinion about her early views, and those expressed in *Original Stories* are no exception. When Mason wishes to praise a child's behavior, she calls her "a friend" and goes on to say that

> ... she deserved the name, for she was no longer a child; a reasonable affection had conquered an appetite; her understanding took the lead, and she had practised a virtue.[38]

When Mason surprises children in the act of injuring animals or insulting servants, she puts the point yet more directly: "It is only to animals that children *can* do good, men are their superiors".[39] Children, in so many words, then, are inferior to adults who

> ... act from the dictates of reason, and whose understandings are arrived at some degree of maturity, while children must be governed and directed till *their's* gains strength to work by itself: for it is the proper exercise of our reason that makes us in any degree independent.[40]

Children, in Mason's opinion (and in Wollstonecraft's), should be made to feel their state of dependence and made to recognise that its cause rests in their own inability to reason, its cure in developing or strengthening their powers of reason.

The implications of such views are clear: virtue, defined as the conquest of appetite by reason, is by definition inaccessible to the child whose reason is, as yet, weak and only half-formed. When a child learns to reason and to make her actions conform to the dictates of her reason, she is no longer, strictly-speaking, a child and is entitled to be provisionally and gradually admitted to the privileges of adulthood. It is thus necessary for the child to submit to varying degrees of dependence and reliance upon authority; but in an adult, dependence is a moral disease, which if left unattended will cripple her emotionally and leave her unfit to contribute to the common good. Thus, the task of education is to prevent the temporary disability of childhood from turning into a permanent liability by teaching both boys and girls to think for themselves. Wollstonecraft's view of moral education is based upon a goal of independence to be achieved by training the mind; as a view of female education this was, in the eighteenth century, unusual; however, the pedagogy by which she recommended such ends be pursued drew on established traditions and appears to be less unorthodox.

The educational views expressed in *Original Stories* are a continuation of Wollstonecraft's earlier views and thus, like those in *Thoughts* or *Mary*, are influenced by both Locke and Rousseau. Like Locke, Wollstonecraft believed that if children were to become reasonable, they must be treated as if they were already so; that physical punishment must be supplanted by pedagogical techniques which relied on the child's natural or inherent desire for approval; that habit formation was the safest and most efficient—the ideal—means of laying the foundation for virtue; and that example was the most effective means of teaching. Again like Locke and unlike Rousseau, she believed teaching, directing, and encouraging the child to imitate the behavior of reasonable and virtuous adults could not be begun too soon. Indeed, the framework around which Wollstonecraft built her educational beliefs is, in general, a Lockean one, and the influence of Rousseau upon Wollstonecraft's *pedagogical* views is by comparison both less pervasive and less obvious.

Rousseau, in Wollstonecraft's opinion, was a genius, the master of pedagogical poetry. But it was this very genius, this mastery, in her opinion, that made his pedagogy so impractical, for it made him the slave of fanciful notions and rhetorical paradoxes. In August 1789 she reviewed a book entitled *Letters on Education* by a Reverend David Williams and approved the cautious use Williams made of the ideas outlined in *Émile*:

> Mr. W. avails himself of the excellent advice contained in that celebrated novel, without being dazzled by brilliant beauties, or disgusted with gross errors; he neither blindly swallows conceited paradoxes, nor joins in the laugh raised by ignorance; but calmly reverts to the ancients, from whom Rousseau drew the foundation of his fanciful structure. Sometimes, we acknowledge, Mr. W. appears, to us, to be a little too severe on the faults of a writer, whose production, if it is not considered as a complete system, yet affords much valuable desultory information and persuasive expostulations ... Rousseau's mistake was the mistake of genius, ever eager to trace a well-proportioned system; though vortex whirling around vortex threatened immediate destruction to the airy fabric, yet every thing must bend to the forming hand of ardent fancy, and worlds and minds move as it directs. Blinded by his prevailing idea, Rousseau, forgetting that he was a warm advocate for the immortality of the soul, endeavours to crowd into the spring-tide of youth, (when vivacity quickly throws off uneasy impressions) the important employment of riper years, the whole business of matured reason; he wished to make his pupil as perfect at the moment he launched into life, as men ought to be when they finished their task, and nobly employed their faculties. He carefully, and arbitrarily, fixes the

> divisions of time, during the years dedicated to education, and overlooks the natural divisions of life into seasons, which may be reckoned distinct, though they smoothly unite without the storm he so poetically describes.[41]

Wollstonecraft, then, did not subscribe to Rousseau's educational system as a whole, but she did believe that it offered "valuable desultory information" which had often been "strangely misunderstood or wilfully perverted".[42] And she did make use of specific ideas in his pedagogical recommendations to suggest that more traditional views be approached with cautionary discretion in light of what he had said. Thus, statements in her work which reflect the educational advice of Rousseau are by no means rare, and certain of her general beliefs about education or her modifying principles—the process of education must be slow and gradual; "every child requires a different mode of treatment";[43] the development of reason is in part a function of a natural maturation process; the tutor must observe his charges' behavior without seeming to do so; the suspicion of rank and aristocratic artificiality about which children need to be warned; the usefulness of natural consequences or Rousseau's "yoke of necessity" as a teaching technique; the wisdom of making children feel their inferiority to spur them on to improvement; and the insistence that a healthy child responds enthusiastically to his physical environment[44]--bear the mark of Rousseau as well as that of Locke.

Perhaps Rousseau's predomimnt pedagogical influence on Wollstonecraft was the whole notion of tle tutor in complete charge of the child's education.[45] The cornerstone of Wollstonecraft's pedagogy, as mentioned previously, was her dep suspicion of parents. This obviously presented a problem to an educaor who was, on one hand, a determinist and, on the other, a severe proponent of moral reform. The tutor, a professional educator and a professional moralist, acting as a surrogate parent was one solution, and one, which as the character of Mrs. Mason proves, to which Wollstonecraft was attracted.

However, even in Original Stories which is based upon the tutor principle, Wollstonecraft was forced to acknowledge that the tutor could be only one, albeit a powerful one, of many influences upon the child and thus could not conduct education as if it were an isolated, or an ideal, experience. Wollstonecraft's description of the ideal pedagogy, like Rousseau's and Locke's, is one which would allow the child to "insensibly grow wiser without being humbled by dictatorial instruction".[46] Mason, as far as possible, intends "to teach imperceptibly, by rendering it amusing",[47] but Wollstonecraft had no Rousseauan illusions about instruction always being amusing and voluntary: the truths she wanted to teach were harsh and involved painful recognition at an early age of economic and social realities that were far from ideal.

The problem posed to Wollstonecraft's educational framework by Rousseauan concepts was how to take into account the real issues or criticisms raised by Rousseau without retreating to his solutions. Or, in other words, how to raise moral children in an immoral world without isolating and protecting them from immorality by creating a "natural" or antiseptically and artificially pure environment.

As Wollstonecraft's Preface to Original Stories makes clear, there was for her no ideal answer to this question, no ideal system of education:

> These conversations and tales are accommodated to the present state of society; which obliges the author to attempt to cure those faults by reason, which ought never to have taken root

> in the infant mind. Good habits, imperceptibly fixed, are far preferable to the precepts of reason; but, as this task requires more judgment than generally falls to the lot of parents, substitutes must be sought for, and medicines given, when regimen would have answered the purpose much better. I believe those who examine their own minds, will readily agree with me, that reason, with difficulty, conquers settled habits, even when it is arrived at some degree of maturity: why then do we suffer children to be bound with fetters, which their half-formed faculties cannot break.[48]

If parents are not to be trusted to inculcate correct habits into their young, it is less likely still that they could be considered capable of managing a system of environmental control as complex as the one outlined in Rousseau's Émile. In the absence of a practical ideal, compromise becomes necessary and inherently distasteful educational realities must be faced:

> But to wish that parents would, themselves, mould the ductile passions, is a chimerical wish, for the present generation have their own passions to combat with, and fastidious pleasures to pursue, neglecting those pointed out by nature: we must therefore pour premature knowledge into the succeeding one; and, teaching virtue, explain the nature of vice. Cruel necessity![49]

Mary, at least in part, was intended to be a criticism of Rousseau's concept of negative education, for one of the reasons that the heroine had so much difficulty conquering her nature was that as a child she was left too much to herself or, in Wollstonecraft's words, "the various movements of her mind were not commented on, nor were the luxuriant shoots restrained by culture".[50] Mary, being a genius, may have derived some benefit from being left to herself and the operations of her own mind, and on this point the novel remained ambiguous, sometimes implying one thing, sometimes its exact opposite. But Original Stories returns to the education of the ordinary and indulges in no such doubts.

Being left to themselves, Caroline and Mary have not been educated by nature, but by servants, and are not only "shamefully ignorant" as a consequence, but have also "caught every prejudice the vulgar casually instill".[51]

Original Stories, then, implies a condemnation of negative education on both theoretical and practical grounds: it is artificial and cannot equip the child to deal with the moral complexities of the real world; it is also impossible, as environments in general and servants in particular are not and cannot be governed by the tutor's concerns. Even Mason, who is as well-intentioned but considerably more intelligent and dedicated than the girls' father, cannot totally control their environment and must make do with constant supervision and totally anti-Rousseauan moralizing lectures which rely on words and on reason to demonstrate the ill effects of certain kinds of behavior.

Wollstonecraft accepted most of Locke's pedagogical recommendations as sound advice, but had the same problem with the Lockean system as had Locke himself: it relied too heavily on the good will and on the vision of parents. And Wollstonecraft was even more reluctant than Locke himself to accept that this was the best that could be done. On the other hand, she accepted many of Rousseau's bitter criticisms of standard educational practice, only to reject his solutions, which she found impractical and often downright silly. Nonetheless, she wished to argue that education could, in fact, be used to shape a morally independent character, and she wished to argue it without denying either Locke's determinism or Rousseau's impassioned criticism--both of which she held to be true. Moreover, she did not want to design yet another virtually useless ideal solution, but to construct a method which could reconcile the demands of the practical with those of the theoretical. Like Thoughts before it, Original Stories is an attempt to outline such a pedagogical approach, an approach that at its simplest could be seen as the result or function of a belief in psychological self-determinism.

Determinism is "the philosophical doctrine that human action is not free but necessarily determined by motives, which are regarded as external forces acting upon the will" (OED) or "the doctrine that everything that happens is determined by a necessary chain of causation" (OED). Generally, determinism can be said to be a doctrine which denies the concept of free will and thus of individual moral responsibility. To a moralist of Wollstonecraft's ilk, this was obviously unacceptable; consequently, without denying the philosophic basis of determinism, she attempted to argue that individual will could in fact exert control, because ultimately what happened to the individual was less deterministic than what and how he thought about what had happened.

According to Locke, the senses convey simple ideas to the mind, which in itself is capable not only of receiving them, but of responding to them. The first or primary response to a simple idea is an involuntary reaction--pleasure, pain, shock, delight, horror--and this reaction, too, is classed as a simple idea. The mind is free to reject neither impressions nor its own reactions to those impressions:

> These simple ideas, when offered to the mind, the understanding can no more refuse to have, nor alter, when they are imprinted, nor blot them out, and make new ones itself, than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliterate the images or ideas which the objects set before it do therein produce. As the bodies that surround us do diversely affect our organs, the mind is forced to receive the impressions, and cannot avoid the perception of those ideas that are annexed to them.[52]

Following Locke's reasoning, Wollstonecraft believed that the passive function of the mind--that connected to the reception of simple ideas--could not be controlled by the will. But the mind, in Locke's words, also "exerts several acts of its own"[53] and is capable of combining, comparing, and abstracting ideas. The mind is, in other words, capable of analysis, and this Wollstonecraft took to mean that the mind might correct or liberate itself from the associations produced by its reception of simple ideas.

Thus, for Wollstonecraft (as for the disciples of many schools of thought, including Christian resignation, Freudian psychoanalysis, and modern existentialism) the individual, despite the vagaries of fate or chance, despite any and all collusion of factors which determine his character, must ultimately accept moral responsibility for his own life. The individual had, in Wollstonecraft's opinion, a moral responsibility to think in certain ways, to analyze simple ideas and chains of association in such a way as to allow him to re-determine his character. What "oftenest occupies the thoughts will influence our actions",[54] she says in Original Stories. In A Vindication of the Rights of Woman she would claim "that the employment of the thoughts shapes the character both generally and individually".[55] And her work as a whole demonstrates that she believed that a genuine concern about morality--careful and honest thinking about moral problems--would in itself help to produce moral action. The meaning of Wollstonecraft's emphasis upon self-education and upon training the mind was based in this belief that thought was as real as any external circumstance and ultimately had more power than external reality to shape or determine character.

Free will was, for Wollstonecraft, a function of reason and intellect; but, because analysis itself was a secondary and passive rather than a primary or active function of the mind, to reason necessarily involved struggle, pain, and conscious effort. It followed that education was a painful process of directing the mind, of recognizing that every "gift of heaven is lent to us for our improvement",[56] and of accepting that, painful or not, self-improvement was our duty to God and our moral responsibility to ourselves. Moral education, then, was a matter of acquiring knowledge—knowledge of the head and of the heart —and all activities had to be evaluated in these terms:

> Music, drawing, works of usefulness and fancy, all amuse and refine the mind, sharpen the ingenuity; and form, insensibly, the dawning judgment.--As the judgment gains strength, so do the passions also; we have actions to weigh, and need that taste in conduct, that delicate sense of propriety, which gives grace to virtue. The highest branch of solitary amusement is reading ... for in reading the heart is touched, till its feelings are examined by the understanding, and the ripenings of reason regulate the imagination. This is the work of years, and the most important of all employments. When life advances, if the heart has been capable of receiving early impressions, and the head of reasoning and retaining the conclusions which were drawn from them; we have acquired a stock of knowledge, a gold mine which we can occasionally recur to, independent of outward circumstances.[57]

A child, of course, could not be expected to direct his thoughts to the same degree as an adult. But Wollstonecraft maintained that teaching children to observe and generalize was the first step in equipping them with the skills necessary to continue their own education. Moreover, these skills could be learnt in the world as it was; they did not rely on an isolated or morally pure environment; nor did they require the child to be subject to only one influence, for once learned observation and generalization could be used to analyze any and all situations.

Pedagogically, Original Stories belongs to the tradition of Locke, because it does stress the role of habit formation in laying the foundations for both virtue and reason. But for Wollstonecraft, the habit of thought was the most important of all habits. And insofar as Original Stories was a children's book, its purpose, as Rauschenbusch-Clough claims, was to teach children "to see the deeper meanings in the daily occurrences of their lives",[58] or, as Wollstonecraft had Mason say,

> ... listen to me whilst I relate in what manner these characters were formed, and the consequence of each adhering to a different mode of conduct.[59]

"Different modes of conduct" resulted at least in part from different modes of thought, and the task of Mason (as Wollstonecraft envisioned it) was to monitor her charges' actions, because they revealed a state of mind which could be corrected if they were taught to reason correctly.

But Original Stories was not just a children's book. Flexner remarks that "it is obviously written for parents",[60] and the criticism of parents that forms the thrust of its Preface could be not only a gratuitous attack, but an attempt to awaken parents to their folly and change their behavior. In the main, however, Original Stories, like Rousseau's Émile, was a pedaggical treatise written for other educators. In her Preface Wollstonecraft claims that

> The Conversations are intended to assist the teacher as well as the pupil; and this will obviate an objection which some may start, that the sentiments are not quite on a level with the capacity of a child. Every child requires a different mode of treatment; but a writer can only choose one, and that must be modified by those who are actually engaged with young people in their studies.[61]

In writing a treatise for teachers, Wollstonecraft was outlining what she took to be a practical system or rather practical principles for a system of morally educating the young.

Wollstonecraft's pedagoical concerns were influenced by her readings of Locke and Rousseau, but the form of Original Stories and its moral content were subject to many other influences. Primary among these were the specific beliefs that formed a tradition of women educationists and the religion and philosophy of Wollstonecraft's friend and mentor Richard Price. The women's tradition was itself directly and clearly influenced by both Locke and Rousseau, and a discussion of how it made use of that influence and modified the concerns of its predecessors follows. The influence of Price on Wollstonecraft's thought is a more complicated question, addressed in Chapter V, for using his thought as a basis and a rationale Wollstonecraft was able to adapt the women's tradition to serve her own belief in independence as the ultimate moral and educational goal.

Eighteenth-Century Women Educators and Children's Literature

Gabriel Compayré claims that by "the fire of his enthusiasm", Rousseau "stamped the science and art of raising men with the majesty and solemnity of a kind of religious revelation", thereby transforming education into "a sacred mission, a sublime ministry".[62] Locke's contribution, if less fiery, had been no less influential and tended to exactly the same end: namely, that of elevating the educator to a new position of dignity and importance. Indeed, the educational controversy stimulated by the conflicting positions of the two great philosophers was, in many ways, less significant than the tone of high seriousness imparted to the discussion as a direct result of their work.

"Good parents", said Sarah Trimmer, "delight to teach their young ones every thing that is proper and useful",[63] while Hester Chapone claimed that "the pleasures of teaching" outweighed the irritation produced by constant association with minds not yet fully formed and therefore of little interest in themselves.[64] In a similar vein, Anna Barbauld described her intention to write for two and three-year-olds as "humble, but not mean" and went on to say that "to lay the first stone of a noble building, and to plant the first idea in a human mind can be no dishonour to any hand".[65] These are not isolated examples: the pleasure, the utility, and the duty of teaching were favourite—one is tempted to say paramount—themes of late eighteenth-century literature.

It was perhaps inevitable that theories which stressed early childhood training must, to one degree or another, elevate and enhance the status of motherhood and thus of women in general. But why such theories should bring women directly into the controversy as participants is less clear. Nevertheless, this is what happened, for by the end of the century most of the important and popular works on education, not to mention the books written specifically for children, were in fact being authored by women, some of whom were obviously determined to make a name for themselves. Dorothy and Mary-Ann Kilner, Hannah More, Sarah Trimmer, Hester Chapone, Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth, Anna Barbauld, Lady Eleanor Fenn, Mrs. Pinchard, Charlotte Smith, Priscilla Wakefield, Mrs. Pilkington, and Ann and Jane Taylor were amongst the women who accepted the eighteenth-century cliché "that women were responsible for the moral sensibility of the young"[66] and made use of that cliché to justify their own entrance into the field of educational debate.

Children's literature, in particular, was a "natural" for women writers: not because they were naturally good at it (many of them weren't), but because in the eyes of Locke, Rousseau, and society as a whole there was a deplorable lack of suitable reading material for the young, an obvious need to rectify the existing situation, which allowed women to avail themselves of a respectable excuse for displaying their feminine sensibility on the published page. By 1791 women were so firmly established as the appropriate and natural monitors of young taste that instead of apologizing for their presumption in publishing, they could claim that the writing of children's literature was not only a duty, but a sacrifice of personal genius to moral concerns:

> It has always been my opinion that a person of genius, who dedicates superior talents to the instruction of young people, deserves the highest applause, and the most enthusiastic admiration. To write with a constant attention to the limited understanding or information of children; to restrain a lively imagination, and employ a mind capable of the most brilliant pursuits on subjects of a puerile kind, seems to be a sort of heroic sacrifice of gratification to virtue, which I cannot doubt is acceptable to the Supreme Being.[67]

To say that women saw in the educational debate an opportunity to justify the publication of their own views is not, however, to imply women writers were merely opportunists. On the contrary, the majority were genuine moralists and dedicated educators. They believed teaching to be one of the highest of callings, one which would admit of no half-way measures, no lukewarm commitments. Their goal was to inculcate virtue in children, and for them the pursuit of virtue was an arduous and demanding task, upon which eternal salvation or damnation, as well as temporal happiness, rested. They did not agree with one another (any more than did men) as to whether children were born good, bad, or morally neutral; but despite their philosophical differences, they did agree that if virtue was neither consciously preserved nor deliberately taught, vice, be it natural or cultural in root cause, would rule. For women like Sarah Trimmer, Hannah More, Mary Wollstonecraft, Anna Barbauld, Dorothy Kilner, and Hester Chapone religion, morality, and education were inseparable. Even rationalists like Maria Edgeworth made it clear that nothing was or could be morally neutral. It is this belief that every single action, every single moment, regardless of how innocuous it may seem, carries great moral significance--an idea nowhere more visible than in the children's stories these women wrote--compounded by the notion that vice is always punished and virtue always rewarded that makes so much of the work of these women unpalatable to modern taste.

Late eighteenth-century children's literature closely resembles an old morality play in structure: good is pitted against bad, and good--in this version with the help of a thoroughly careful education--ultimately triumphs. To some degree, this simplistic structure and its corollary belief that God had so ordained the world as to ensure the punishment of vice and the reward of virtue yield to pragmatic educational explanations. Women writers, more often than not, were mothers, teachers, or aunts before they were writers; experience taught that to persuade children to virtue one had to offer more than spiritual incentives; one had, in fact, to put the whole conflict between good and bad in a materialistic and tangible context which small minds could readily grasp. And at this, there can be no doubt, women writers were magnificently skilled: in their stories good children receive not only praise and approbation, but every form of material reward, while bad children suffer everything from loss of favourite possessions to public humiliations to beatings and "well-deserved" deaths. Moreover, within the framework of the stories themselves, by a curious kind of compulsion in their writing, the authors do manage to convince the reader that such distribution and retribution is not only divinely just, but eminently plausible as well.

As moralists writing for children, these writers tried to present a simple kind of justice, an uncomplicated morality. They were inevitably against cruelty to animals, slavery, and brutality of any kind; predictably, they were in favour of industry, obedience, duty, moderation, resignation, charity, benevolence, humility, neatness, propriety, prudence, moral courage, peace and domestic tranquillity. As educators, they were similarly against any form of subtlety, any play of the imagination which might (unnecessarily, they felt) complicate or obscure the straightforward path of duty. To this effect, they banished fairy tales from the nursery, arguing that just as romances encouraged false pictures of life in women so, too, would fantasy of any kind destroy or at least weaken the fabric of reality in a child's mind.[68]

Eighteenth-century women educators could not be said to be realists, for they believed in a moral reality which most certainly did not exist in the terms they envisioned it. On the other hand, they saw reality too clearly to be idealists with vague utopian longings. They judged the world harshly, by standards derived from an inner moral certainty of the way things should be, but they were, nonetheless, willing to be part of that world and to commit themselves to making changes in it. They are perhaps best classed as pragmatic moralists who centered their desire for reform on that most pragmatic and moral of concerns--education. If they did not believe education could do everything, they did believe it could do a great deal more than the general populace was willing to credit. Thus, they were willing to bring their high moral standards to bear not just on children, but on the public as a whole. If they were intent on reform, they were, however, no less intent on going about it with prudence and discretion. And nowhere does this dual concern reveal itself more fully than in the cautious use they made of the ideas of reformers like Locke and Rousseau.

Women, unlike men, were neither trained nor particularly interested in constructing logical theoretical models. The most important feature of their work is the practical bias which dominates it, a bias which indeed often determined the very ideas that influenced them. For example, Locke exerted a more obvious pedagogical influence upon this group as a whole than did Rousseau; regardless of how attracted to Rousseauan concepts women may have found themselves, even regardless of how much they may have found themselves in theoretical agreement with his views, Rousseau's educational system was for many women (as has earlier been said of Wollstonecraft) simply too impractical; Lockean notions were more accessible in the sense that one could see how they might reasonably be put into practice. Quite apart from the general influence of Locke, individual women writers may have been particularly indebted to either Locke or Rousseau, but, in either case, their work reveals that, despite what they may have had to say on the topic, they believed that if Locke was good and Rousseau was good, then a little of each was better.

Even Hannah More, who was violently opposed to almost everything Rousseau stood for, went so far as to say that while original impulses were anything but good, the process of correcting them had to be slow and gradual: passions, she says, echoing Rousseau, must be "gradually inclined" not "violently bent" towards virtue.[69] If Rousseau's most deadly opponents used some of his ideas, his most ardent disciples softened and rationalized the distinction he had made between the sexes, modified his definition of negative education, speeded up his developmental schedule, and, most important of all, despite their sincere belief in his system of letting the child learn by experience, could not forbear following the natural consequences of good or bad behavior with a good old-fashioned lecture. Likewise, the most dedicated Lockeans were content to repeat his advice about delivering reproofs to the child in private and giving him praise in public, while in their own work they could not renounce the pedagogically satisfying (if not sound) rhetoric of the lecture, nor the drama of public humiliation. Women educators, then, borrowed their methodology from a variety of sources and adapted it to pragmatic considerations without undue regard for the particular view of childhood from which the pedagogical technique had been derived in the first place. Consequently, most of these writers cannot be said to display a methodology which is perfectly consistent with any one theoretical model or view of the nature of the child. This does not mean, however, that such writers were necessarily atheoretical, but merely that their educational theory was as much bound by the practical and by actual observation of children as by strict logic or the rules of abstraction.

If the educational practice recommended in these works seems to shift with considerations of time, place, and situation, the goals underlying the techniques remain constant. These writers were, to repeat, moralists; if they did not intend to change the structure of society, they did work to change people within that structure, to reform their morals and to intensify their sense of duty. As mentioned above, one of the incentives they offered to such change was the assurance that virtue was not only worthwhile in itself, but would bring tangible rewards in its wake. And in this they followed their age.

Virtue, in the first place, was believed to be its own reward, in the sense that it gave pleasure, immense, almost sensual, pleasure, to the individual who had indulged himself in it, as well as to the person who had benefitted from it. What the twentieth century would regard as smugness, complacency, self-congratulation, or even hypocrisy the eighteenth century regarded as the natural and well-deserved reward of the virtuous impulse or action, and it not only encouraged the individual to be virtuous, but also to luxuriate in the emotions of self-satisfaction that virtue produced. In the second place, the eighteenth century believed that virtue would in general lead to an increase in personal happiness or satisfaction, because a person who was genuinely concerned about others would be liked and respected; being held in esteem, he would, in fact, be more likely to receive the rewards of social life, be they emotional sustenance or material gain.

These general truths were felt to be particularly applicable to the situation of women: in the first place, women were "naturally" more emotional than men; in the second, they were more protected from the aggression of the world at large; given these two factors, it made sense that they would be more free to give full reign both to the emotions that "caused" virtue and to the emotions virtue released. The idea was akin and in fact part of the whole concept of sensibility and was, of course, balanced by the recognition that such virtue, if not regulated by reason, could quickly lead to vice.

Women were quick to accept such a definition of virtue and even quicker to put it to work to their own advantage. In their writing they were prone to exaggerate the century's distinction between male and female virtue and to place even more importance upon it than did male writers. At the same time, however, they implied that, despite the fact that women were less capable of abstraction than men, women could nevertheless be _taught_ to reason well enough to control their own emotions. By insisting women be trained for virtue--and who could argue with that?--these writers were in fact insisting that women's minds be strengthened to the point where their emotional superiority became a straightforward and indisputable moral superiority to men. Stories authored by women are full of male characters with fine minds who are nonetheless incapable of morality because they lack the feeling component of virtue, full of male characters who are driven to immorality or madness by the pressure of their own passions which their reason cannot control, and even fuller of heroines whose tender, virtuous feelings (which is the only kind they have) are perfectly and smoothly regulated by their own minds and their sense of duty to themselves.

Women writers recognized that part of the moral superiority of their sex was a gift of nature, but they also knew that it was a gift which could only be secured through education, and they intended to secure it. They were vehement in their attacks on those vices seen as peculiar to their sex--vanity, pedantry, and affectation--partly because, if not corrected, they would certainly undermine the view of woman as the more moral of the two sexes. While women writers did not deny that such failings were somehow intrinsic to the female mind, they did argue that they were not so much insurmountable feminine inclinations, as the result of an improper and careless education. As women, both the novelists and the educationists took a firm stand in favour of domestic and feminine virtues--passive resistance against active defiance, delicacy against coarseness, courtesy against the brutality they felt to be all too common in masculine society--and they were adamantly against anything that could weaken this position.

As they had exaggerated at least one part of the eighteenth-century belief in the natural differences between the sexes, so, too, did women educators exaggerate the standard cliché that virtue was rewarded and vice punished. In their moralism, these women often anticipated the utilitarian theories of men like Jeremy Bentham, where virtue _is_ what leads to happiness, vice _is_ what leads to pain, and moralizing about a moment's pleasure for an hour's pain is an accepted part of the mathematics of morality. This is fine in a utilitarian, who after all does not pretend to absolute standards of morality, but it is suspicious--and often rather distasteful--in writers who imagine themselves to be applying high moral standards, absolute rights and wrongs, to the smallest details of everyday life. The prudential morality of women educationists, especially in the literature they wrote for children, often appears like mere expediency, wherein morality is not only dominated but destroyed by prudence. This does not, however, so much reveal a basic timidity or abject submission to convention in women, as much as a genuine moral confusion.

It is clear that women not only offered the vice-virtue reward system as an incentive to virtue, but that they needed to believe, and in fact did believe, that self-abnegation was a moral achievement, one which they could confidently recommend to others, value in themselves, and, further, one which entitled them to social approbation and applause. Here, one suspects, their view of the way the world ought to be interfered not with their perception of reality, but with their assessment of it, and consequently one expects--and finds--an element of wish-fulfillment creeping not just into women's novels, but into their moral and educational tracts as well.

That confusion and wish-fulfillment, at times compounded by the author's obvious resentment that the world was not measuring up to her personal standards, should be displayed in the work of women educationists is far from surprising when one considers the near impossibility of reconciling high moral standards with realistic, pragmatic, reformist goals. What is surprising is the degree to which late eighteenth-century educational writers were, in fact, able to achieve this. Their tracts, their children's tales, their personal letters reveal genuine convictions, a strong sense of mission, and a basic optimism. Their faith in education, in literature, and in themselves was little short of amazing.

Sarah Trimmer closed her Fabulous Histories by exhorting her young readers "to select the best for [their] own imitation, and take warning by the rest".[70] Dorothy Kilner's Preface to The Village School addressed itself directly to its intended audience, explaining that the book was not only going to be amusing while it was being read, but was going to "likewise help to increase your love of goodness, and your abhorrence of every thing that is evil".[71] Hester Chapone's Letters on the Improvement of the Mind instructed her niece to read and reread "those passages which excite you to virtue".[72] Mary Wollstonecraft's Preface to Original Stories was confident in its belief that "the Tales, which were written to illustrate the moral, may recall it, when the mind has gained sufficient strength to discuss the argument from which it was deduced".[73] Such women believed their writing was itself an incentive to virtue, and Ruth Perry might well be speaking of all of them when she refers to Sarah Trimmer's contribution as

> ... a testimony to her unwavering belief that the misfortunes and solutions of others could be of use to those learning from them. She was sure that her stories could change the lives of her readers if only they acted upon what they read.[74]

For such educators the belief in the reformative power of literature and in themselves as writers amounted to a moral certainty, and this in turn became their weapon, a weapon wielded in their prose with simple strength and considerable effectiveness.

It is this moral certainty, this unfailing didacticism, that has damned eighteenth-century women educationists in the eyes of modern criticism. Those who wrote for children have been particularly pilloried for their banishment of the fairy tale and the allure of the imagination it embodied by those who are particularly concerned with the history of children's literature. Charles Lamb, searching unsuccessfully for a copy of Goody Two Shoes, was one of the first to complain: "Damn them!--I mean the cursed Barbauld Crew, those Blights and Blasts of all that is Human in man and child".[75] He went on, somewhat more calmly, to explain that

> Goody Two Shoes is almost out of print. Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery. ... Science has succeeded to poetry no less in all the little walks of children than with men. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with tales and old wives' fables in childhood, you had been crammed with geography and natural history![76]

Twentieth-century criticism could not agree more. Paul Hazard, describing Sarah Trimmer as "odious" and "boring", goes on to claim that the late eighteenth century produced a "whole battalion of these fearsome women".[77] Percy Muir calls women writers of the period "A Monstrous Regiment".[78] Margaret Gillespie dubs them "The Female Admonishers" and implies that their brand of realism can be summed up as "remember thy creator, thy lessons, and thy manners".[79] Bettina Hürlimann believes Madame de Genlis's works or others like them are still worth looking at today, "partly for laughs and partly as a reminder of the progress which has been made in educational theory".[80] Cornelia Meigs comments on the "complete stultification of the imagination" evident in the works of "The Little Female Academy".[81] And Mary F. Thwaite sees in their work an "amazing rigidity", as "cause and effect in behavior were shown to work with a clockwork precision and inevitability", an approach which, she claims, with few exceptions, quickly led to "the stuff of parody".[82]

These women, it would appear, are difficult to take seriously, precisely because they took themselves so very seriously in the first place. Their earnestness, their heavy-handed didacticism, their very sincerity irritate the modern sensibility. Critics, searching for an explanation of what seems to them a naive faith in education and a ridiculous determination to turn every minute in life into a learning experience, single out Rousseau for blame. Most believe his principles were misinterpreted and his intentions undermined by his own disciples. On the other hand, Paul Hazard suggests that the turn taken in children's literature in the eighteenth century is traceable to Rousseau's own love of the tragic or pathetic, which meant that everything worthwhile, education included, had to be very grand and very serious. In any case, after Rousseau, as one of these critics puts it, "Day and night these ardent educators stalked their children, allowing them never a moment for play or fancy but instructing and improving on every page".[83]

Not all critics are as disapproving of the literature the eighteenth century produced for its children's edification and amusement as the above examples suggest, and even the most disapproving of critics has one or two favourites whom he exempts from the harshness of his general remarks. However, even more generous critics--of whom F.J. Harvey Darton is perhaps the best example--cannot fail to condemn certain key aspects of this literature. The writers of "the Moral Tale", says Darton, were "far better at telling a story than at constructing one", for their "very themes made for feebleness of plot". Nonetheless, the Moral Tale is not, in Darton's opinion, "utterly stultifying and conservative", and it has "a characteristic sincerity and interest even yet for older readers". "[S]till", he concludes, "unless one reads very closely, [these] books cannot but give a certain impression of rigidity, of inhuman excellence, of making life not worth living in the attempt to live it worthily".[84]

If eighteenth-century children's literature has not met with posterity's approval, it has aroused its curiosity. How could such obvious didacticism, such a blatant subordination of every aspect of childhood to the teaching impulse, ever have been popular? Is it possible that children could ever have enjoyed stories in which they are pursued, harassed, and hindered by omniscient and omnipotent elders? Percy Muir, whose choice of words reveals his lack of sympathy with the literature he is describing, claims, nonetheless, "there is a nauseating fascination about these arch and insipid anecdotes that tempts one to continue to quote them".[85] Despite its bias, Muir's statement is representative of a queer kind of tribute, an uneasy recognition that such stories possess not just historical value but a kind of power in themselves. Beyond the concession that Maria Edgeworth, if no one else, could at least tell a story and that Anna Barbauld (and later Mrs. Sherwood) possessed a fine command of English prose, critics have been reluctant to trace the source of the more compulsive--and compelling--qualities inherent in the period's brand of feminine didacticism.

Recently, this attitude has begun to change. Cornelia Meigs suggests that women writers felt particularly endangered by social change and compensated "by a strict and literal clinging to what they saw as truth",[86] while Gillian Avery argues that the concerns revealed in children's literature were the product of an alternate response-resistance pattern to cultural change.[87] But in Ellen Moers's Literary Women, Avery's emphasis upon the severe austerity presented by women writers, their fondness for cold rational mothers, and their overall chilly reasonableness is developed into a fully-articulated theory for the first time.

"For women writers fascinated by power", says Moers, "the place to look, as feminists are often too rushed to notice, is motherhood; but it is a kind of motherhood that male writers are often too slow to recognize".[88] Crudely-put, Moers's view of what she terms "educating heroinism" is a question of power, an interpretation of pedagogical principles and an appropriation of the educational tract or children's story to serve and encourage the "female fantasy" of an absolute matriarchy, the creation of "a world apart, remote, serene, and orderly, where feminine authority can reign supreme".[89] The world thus created is timeless, austere, severe in its insistence on authority, and rigidly and deliberately divorced from reality. Women in such tales, are only technically wives: first and foremost they are the Mother-Teachers, not of everyday life, but of fiction, where their rule, given their woman author, is inviolate, and they are presented as "great queens, who impose order on the world".[90] Moers's interpretation brilliantly illuminates one side of the women's tradition, a side seen most clearly in the works of Madame de Genlis, who, in turn, exerted a considerable influence on the shape and development of the English tradition.

The work of Madame de Genlis was widely read and admired in England.

Eighteenth-century Anglo-French relations were characterized by a lively exchange of ideas made possible by the rapidity with which translations from one language to the other were published, as well as by the fact that the educated classes of each country were equally proficient in reading either language, and throughout the century reciprocal influence remained the rule. Locke had recommended the moulding of the child's character by a system of approval and disapproval; Rousseau rejected the notion only to replace it with the similar one that a child could be controlled and motivated by being made to feel the inferiority of his state to that of the adult's. But Genlis and the women writers who followed her, making use of such notions, brought them to perfection and discovered (or at least made explicit in their work in a way that neither Locke nor Rousseau had done) the sheer power of a pedagogy which moulded the child by emphasizing his weakness and his reliance upon maternal wisdom.

The work of women educationists, French or English, was in general based on Locke's recommendation to treat the child with warm approval when he behaved well and cold, stiff formality when he didn't, Rousseau's view of the Mother and the Tutor collapsed into one personage, traditional or conventional views of class and sex roles, and a religious moralism (based on the notion of "just deserts") which was, even by the standards of the day, severe. Religious rationales were constantly used in this work not only to justify existing political and social structures, but also to argue that every form of tyranny or oppression, while a transgression of God's will, had a place in His Divine Plan which would in time become clear even to mere mortals. These writers' determination to reform private or individual morals without acknowledging that there was anything contradictory about a God or a society which permitted or even encouraged one individual, class, or sex to exploit another to the degree they themselves depicted cannot but appear strange to the modern reader. It must, however, be admitted they were ingenious in their explanations of why the poor should be content to remain poor and women content to subject themselves to the will of husbands and fathers.

Women had been told to see their comfort and their safety in religion, in passive acceptance of God's will, not in action of any kind. If women educationists were in any way typical of their sex as a whole, it would appear that women had indeed accepted the proposition. And yet, it is also clear that in writers, at least, such an acceptance was far from passive or unthinking conformity to social expectation. Judging from their work, women did put their faith in God, but such faith did not represent a passive resignation to the way things were, so much as a willful determination to make religion an active social force.

It is also clear that women's literary and educational traditions were troubled by underlying conflicts which belie the smooth surface of their seeming conventionality. For the educationists in particular their very morality--which was at the center of their work--was torn between pragmatism and safety, on the one hand, and the desire for reform and "holier-than-thou" visions of reality, on the other. Perhaps even more important was the inevitable disappointment when reality failed to reward virtue with appropriate material or social gain or to punish vice with suitable calamities. Some writers were capable of ignoring such dilemmas and continuing with their work as usual. Others entrenched themselves more firmly in their religious conviction that merited rewards and punishments would be meted out on the Day of Judgement, while still others consoled themselves with pre-Freudian analyses of how only the good could be happy and the guilty would suffer despite wealth, prosperity, and all the other accoutrements of happiness. In any case, certain innate contradictions between these writers' expectations and their perceptions of reality led to conflicts, which in one way or another had to be contained or neutralized. Consequently, women writers were forced to evolve strategies to deny, ignore, solve, or otherwise deal with the problem.

In educational tracts written by women, obedience is the prime virtue, and, as Gillian Avery suggests, most writers appear to believe, although only Mrs. Sherwood would later put it in so many words, that the parent was "God's viceroy on earth" and that "disobedience of parents was in fact the cardinal sin because it implied disobedience of God".[91] Women, of course, had less obeying to do than children, but more than men, and they saw it as the prime virtue in children because they had been told--and had accepted--that it was the prime virtue in themselves. As Tompkins points out, the fact that women saw themselves as obeying so very well was another ploy in their bid for moral superiority. Thus, one strategy for dealing with conflict becomes clear, and it is a kind of self-rewarding, self-fulfilling martyrdom: in women's educational fables obedience to accepted authority, regardless of how wrong-headed that authority might be, is elevated from mere virtue to an exalted state that almost if not quite represents religious ecstasy.

The women's tradition, then, can in general be defined by its attempt to present a particular moral view of the world, one which would conform to the standards of the age and yet grant women a new and important role in the moral reconstruction of society. Given this definition, Mary Wollstonecraft's place in the tradition established by her female contemporaries and also the relationship between her "conservative" and "radical" work emerge with new clarity. The shape, the form, and much of the content of Wollstonecraft's early work were derived from that particular body of concerns, attitudes, and conflicts inhabited by women writers. Thoughts on the Education of Daughters is a woman's courtesy book; Mary, A Fiction, a woman's novel; Original Stories from Real Life, a woman's educational fable. But more importantly, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman is also a woman's book, and one, which because it consciously and methodically seeks to present a view which would conform to the moral (if not the political) standards of eighteenth-century England and yet insists that women become active participants in moral reform, may safely be said to represent one possible culmination and clarification of the concerns basic to and implicit in all eighteenth-century women's work. The words one possible are important, for if women shared concerns relative to their situation as women, they brought to them a wide variety of backgrounds, personal preferences, political opinions, intellectual abilities, and literary skills.

One of the major differences between Mary Wollstonecraft's work and that of other women writers lies in the literary and intellectual strategies she devised to resolve or neutralize the particular conflicts that beset her as a woman writer. And of all her work Original Stories is the book which most clearly reveals Wollstonecraft's difficulty in reconciling her need to conform with her desire to rebel, a difficulty which results not only in a narrative which is alternately angry and complacent, bitter and serene, but in a tone which is typically feminine and an open declaration of independence which is not.

Original Stories: Feminine Moral Tale

Original Stories was modelled on Thomas Day's Sandford and Merton and Sarah Trimmer's Fabulous Histories, and like them was designed to be read to and by children. Day's self-confessed reverence for the educational theories of Rousseau is evident on nearly every page of Sandford and Merton and is most clearly seen in the juxtaposition of the all-wise tutor, Mr. Barlow, with the well-meaning but inept parents of Tommy Merton. More Rousseauan than Rousseau on this point, Day obviously felt that most parents (and all rich ones) were pedagogical amateurs and that education was a matter best left to professionals. Sarah Trimmer, whose attitude towards Rousseau was as disapproving as Day's was adoring, could not have agreed less, and Fabulous Histories clearly prefers the parental to the tutorial influence. Wollstonecraft's creation of Mrs. Mason, who has been termed a "female Super-Barlow",[92] her description of the girls' negligent father, and her introductory remarks on the selfishness and ignorance characteristic of parents in general demonstrate her agreement with Day on the matter.

Original Stories's debt to Sandford and Merton is, in fact, strikingly clear. Both books consist of a series of incidents or stories linked to each other and to the main plot (which is the education of the children) by having the tutor narrate the stories to his/her pupils. In Day these stories are often fantastic in nature; in Wollstonecraft they are more often pathetic. But, in each case, the story is designed to illustrate a particular moral point and one which at least one of the pupils, in his or her tutor's opinion, is in danger of missing. Further, while it was common to use children's literature to instill in young readers a sense of social duty and an awareness of the misery that greed and self-absorption could cause, Wollstonecraft and Day (unlike Trimmer) suggest the rich and powerful are more often bad than not. And while neither goes so far as to argue openly that a more equitable distribution of wealth and power might be in order, they do often seem to imply just that.

However, one need not rely solely on internal evidence or a comparison of the two books to support the claim that Wollstonecraft agreed with many of Day's opinions: Sandford and Merton was published in three volumes, the first appearing in 1783, the second in 1786, and the third in 1789; in October of 1789 Wollstonecraft reviewed the third volume for The Analytical and was voluminous in her praise of it. In particular she approved Day's goal of "educating a man, and not like Madame Genlis, a nobleman", his championing of "the unbending virtues of humanity, honor, true courage, and universal benevolence" over "common prejudices, and false notions of happiness", his ability to make "the real dignity of man . . . obvious to a child", and his attitudes towards women's education which, she says, coincided perfectly with her own in that "he wishes to see women educated like rational creatures, and not made mere polished playthings, to amuse the leisure hours of men".[93] In the same review, once again citing Madame Genlis as an example, she criticized educators who believed obedience was in itself a virtue; her remarks on techniques which subjected the child to "an almost Egyptian bondage", by attempting to inculcate "blind faith instead of a submission to reason",[94] recall an earlier review (published the same year as Original Stories) in which she had complained that children were "not to be exalted to virtue, by hearing that life is but a dream, and that the human heart is naturally depraved".[95] As a theorist, then, Wollstonecraft would have been much more in agreement with Thomas Day's modified Rousseauanism than with Sarah Trimmer's evangelical belief in human depravity and her authoritarian insistence on obedience.

However, in the discussion of the formative influences on Original Stories, theory must ultimately be said to take second place to sex, for despite the obvious influence Sandford and Merton exerted on the structure, the ideas, and the characters of Wollstonecraft's book, Trimmer's influence was yet more powerful. Given Ellen Moers's argument that the woman educator almost always spoke in a narrative voice that was "crisp", "severe", and "very wise",[96] it is not difficult to see why Wollstonecraft is included in Moers's analysis of educating heroinism. Original Stories is feminine in tone: it does not adopt Day's rustic, rough and tumble, almost simplistic, worship of Rousseauan masculinity, but Trimmer's intense, almost morbid, fascination with moral temptation and salvation.[97]

While Day was a straightforward and, at times, even slavish disciple of Rousseau, he truly allowed his child-characters to learn and profit from their mistakes. Wollstonecraft, while aiming at a similar end, was too much a woman of her time not to feel the danger of recommending women learn by experience. Consequently, her belief in experience as the best of all possible teachers is constantly undercut by fear, suspicion, and hesitation. Mistakes in Day lead to temporary setbacks, but in Wollstonecraft, as in Trimmer, they often lead to permanent entrapment, crippling, or even death. Original Stories does outline a pedagogical system which is based on the Rousseauan notion that the tutor's function is to ensure that children see and endure the consequences of their actions, but it also implies that such consequences can be deadly and that it is far safer not to make any mistakes in the first place.

If women like Wollstonecraft and Trimmer had confined their fears about the efficacy of experience as a teacher to the grand passions or the cardinal sins, their injunctions would have been only reasonable. It is their insistence that every mistake, no matter how small or minor, is likely to set the child irrevocably on the road to hell that makes their work seem so unnecessarily cruel. Children are punished for the slightest offence, and even more distressing is the author's conviction that punishment is not at all the result of a child doing something an adult does not want him to do, but always the application of the adult's reason to the child's unreasonableness. If a child overeats, the "reasonable" response, say Trimmer and Wollstonecraft, is to take him (her) to the pig-sty and explain at great length how a pig is so greedy that not even another pig can love it.[98] On points like this one, Wollstonecraft and Trimmer are in complete agreement, an agreement constituted less by the policy they recommend, than by the tone in which they recommend it.

Almost every twentieth-century critic who has reviewed the edition of Original Stories illustrated by Blake has seen fit to note that Blake obviously either did not understand the character of Mason or could not bring himself to illustrate what he saw.[99] The sensitive Blake, they say, drew a portrait of a lovely, lithe, young Mrs. Mason which has to have been the reflection of his own soul, not of Wollstonecraft's Masonic side. Mason, as the very name and certainly the book implies, must, in critical opinion, be solid, matronly, as physically as she is emotionally dominant, and this weak, lovely, Blakean creature simply looks too "nice" to be Mason. But neither Trimmer nor Wollstonecraft--

nor any other eighteenth-century woman educator--would have seen any contradiction between the sweetness, the femininity, of Blake's drawing and the will of steel that was to characterize Mason's mind. Far from finding it a contradiction, they would, in fact, have seen in it an apt metaphor for the very paradox their work sought to embody: a conventionally feminine, attractive, obedient female who nevertheless possessed a mind of her own and who was determined, singlehandedly if necessary, to reform the morals of society through educational experiments which would shape and mould the child's character.

Men often wrote books in which the heroine was genuinely submissive, timid, and obedient. Women only appeared to write books of which the same could be said. In particular, women educators wrote books in which the central female characters were submissive and obedient but never timid, books in which the heroine's deference to authority was never called in question because no one ever questioned her judgment, books in which the rule that woman was inferior to man was carried out according to the letter but not the spirit of the law. Women authors created conventional women characters, but they adhered more closely in spirit to the conventions established in the work of other women than to the intention of the conventions established by men. And they did so without raising their voices and without rousing suspicion.

The sharp dichotomy between Original Stories's surface conventionality and its bitter undertone can be attributed to its author's difficulty in reconciling theory with what she saw as fact. The eighteenth century held that if women were modest, submissive, deferential to male authority, and content to rule only the domestic circle they would in turn be protected, loved, and venerated. That Wollstonecraft wished to believe that this was indeed the natural order of things and also to recommend women define themselves by tranquil domesticity is clear in her presentation of Mrs. Trueman as the ideal woman. That she did not in fact believe that safety lay in dependence is equally clear both in her presentation of Mrs. Mason as an alternative ideal of womanhood and in the array of secondary characters she uses to demonstrate that dependence was only another name for helplessness and that its reward was not adoration, but starvation.

Mrs. Trueman, the wife of a poor clergyman and the mother of several children, is, next to Mason herself, the most important character in Original Stories. As a wife, she is dependent on her husband, solicitous of his needs, sensitive to his moods, and desirous of his approbation; as a mother, she is charmingly attentive to her children, concerned with their welfare, and determined to bring them up properly. She is, in short, a good wife and mother. She is also a "lady", a term which implies, for Wollstonecraft, not money or power, but the breeding and manners that represent a certain set of social values.

Mrs. Trueman's most important characteristic is neither her ability for music nor her other considerable accomplishments, but what Wollstonecraft terms "her goodness", which seems to mean her willingness to make herself "agreeable" by putting the needs of others ahead of her own.[100] Mrs. Trueman, as the following speech delivered by her to the girls in Mason's charge reveals, is content to seek pleasure by creating it for others:

> Mr. Trueman has a taste for the fine arts; and I wish in every thing to be his companion. His conversation has improved my judgment, and the affection an intimate knowledge of his virtues has inspired, increases the love I feel for the whole human race. He lives retired from the

> world; to amuse him after the business of the day is over, and my babes asleep, I sing to him. A desire to please, and the pleasure I read in his eyes, give to my music energy and tenderness. When he is ruffled by worldly cares, I try to smooth his wrinkled brow, and think mine a voice of melody when it has had that effect. ... I am happy when I can amuse those I love; it is not then vanity, but tenderness, that spurs me on, and my songs, my drawings, my every action, has something of my heart in it. When I can add to the innocent enjoyments of my children, and improve them at the same time, are not my accomplishments of use? In the same style, when I vary the pleasures of my fire-side, I make my husband forget that it is a lonely one; and he returns to look for elegance at home, elegance that he himself gave the polish to; and which is only affected, when it does not flow from virtuous affections.[101]

The Trueman marriage is a romantic idyll; their home a retreat from the world; their values distinctly middle class. Throughout Original Stories, Mrs. Trueman is held up to the girls being educated, trained in the ways of true ladyhood, as an ideal example: if they imitate her womanly behavior, her domestic virtues, her respect for her superiors, and her kindness to inferiors, they, too, someday will be adored mothers and beloved wives.

Original Stories's portrayal of Mrs. Trueman is interesting in several respects. First of all, it is the one facet of the book into which no bitterness or darkness is allowed; Wollstonecraft's uncharacteristic gentleness on the topic betrays her sincere belief in the possibilities of marital bliss and her absolute refusal to hold it up to ridicule in any way. In the second place, Wollstonecraft's description of the Truemans is used not only to rationalize a traditional view of marriage but one of class as well, for the Truemans are not only poor but recognize the futility of human attempts to define worth by wealth or rank and so content to remain poor. The Truemans' virtue is, in fact, made evident, if not actually caused, by their poverty. They remain unfailingly kind, sympathetic, and resigned to their fate, to the point of making no objection whatsoever against God or society despite the fact that Mrs. Trueman has been cheated out of two separate fortunes (one by the law of primogeniture, the other by Lady Sly's vicious lies) and her husband, due to an arbitrary whim or prejudice of the clerical establishment, has been denied preferment. Their virtue is thus established, because, as Wollstonecraft says, "in spite of their mutual disappointments" they "are contented with their lot" and "are preparing themselves and children for another world, where truth, virtue and happiness dwell together".[102]

In her discussion of the Truemans--and Mrs. Trueman in particular--Wollstonecraft argues that poverty or misfortune of any kind cannot with reason be resented because human corruption and the pain it causes are no more than instruments in the mysterious working of God's will. Poverty, in fact, is a test, almost a challenge, and those who sink under its pressure are those weak-minded or vain enough to define their own worth only by seeing it reflected in the eyes of others. Mrs. Trueman, on the other hand, is who she is because she has faced the trial, resigned herself to poverty with good grace, and thus survived with her dignity intact. As she is rewarded for her womanly submissiveness by having her husband adore her, so is she rewarded for spiritual humility by being granted a special assurance of God's love for her: "It is conscious worth, truth, that gives dignity to her walk, and simple elegance to her conversation".[103]

The girls are taken (usually as a reward for good behavior) to see Mrs. Trueman four or five times in the course of the book and have her virtues related to them many more. But while she is explicitly presented to Caroline and Mary as someone they should imitate, it is nonetheless Mason with whom they spend nearly every minute of their waking hours, and it is she who is intended to be the primary influence on them. "I", announces Mrs. Mason, "every day set you an example".[104] It is an example very different from the Trueman one, for if the two women hand out similar kinds of advice they lead very dissimilar lives.

Trueman is poor and dependent on her husband and children to give meaning to her life, while Mason is not only rich but relentlessly independent. If Trueman's reward for her maternal domesticity is being beloved, with Mason's money and independence comes a new kind of reward, and that is power. Mason is not just the most powerful but the only powerful character in the book, and she dwarfs everything and everyone around her.

Mason's power demonstrates itself in at least three ways. First, her wealth enables her to indulge benevolent impulses without restraint and thus earns (or, for the more cynical, buys) her the undying gratitude of every other character in the book. Second, her wealth and independence allow her the leisure and freedom to undertake a career, and it is no accident that the one she chooses is the only one (in women's eyes) that was even more important than motherhood, for the kind of educator Mason is has little to do with real underpaid, overworked, lonely eighteenth-century governesses and everything to do with Genlis's ruling queens and Rousseau's dedicated, manipulative men-of-vision. And third, her independence, the absence in her life of any male figure to be relied upon, ensures her not only freedom of movement, but freedom of thought as well; and as the book shows her travelling from one place to another alone, so it attempts to demonstrate that she thinks for herself in a way Trueman does not. In thought and in action, both Mason and Trueman are, of course, religious women who rely on God. But even here there is a significant difference in their attitudes, for although Mason's God (like Trueman's) demands resignation, he demands as well reason, and it is through her own reason that Mason is to interpret His commands. It is, in fact, her devotion to reason in general that separates Mason from Trueman, for while Trueman represents conventional middle-class values, Mason represents those values which belonged to that portion of the eighteenth-century middle class who defined themselves as progressive or liberal in outlook.

Wollstonecraft has no problem reconciling a liberal with a more traditional approach on a strictly theoretical level, as there was, for her, no inherent contradiction between logic and faith. For example, the rationalist's definition of virtue which she translates as "first, to avoid hurting any thing; and then, to contrive to give as much pleasure as you can"[105] is, in her opinion, perfectly compatible with the believer's definition of the same concept, which she gives as follows:

> In order to please God, and our happiness depends upon pleasing him, we must do good. What we call virtue, may thus be explained:—we exercise every benevolent affection to enjoy comfort here, and to fit ourselves to be angels hereafter.[106]

Given Wollstonecraft's insistence that reason was necessary even in the individual's relationship with God, it is not surprising that she believed women's minds had to be developed: a creature who depended upon anyone but herself to make moral decisions was not a woman, but "a child, an overgrown one, whose mind did not expand as the body grew".[107]

There is no suggestion in Original Stories, however, that Mrs. Trueman is only an overgrown child while Mrs. Mason is a functioning adult. The difference between the two characters is more subtle than this and lies as much in their relative position to, or situation in, the world as it does in their personalities. Mrs. Trueman, as the feminine ideal of womanhood, is allowed to live in a relatively safe and protected environment. She might in fact even be said to inhabit the world of feminine romantic fantasy or wish-fulfillment common to most women's novels. Mrs. Mason, the liberal woman, is allowed no such world for she is first and foremost a teacher who represents not the romantic but the pedagogical fantasy of power, and teachers (in Wollstonecraft's opinion), despite wealth, independence, and power, are forced to witness the liberal's darker vision of society's laws and institutions. But ultimately Original Stories's vision is too dark; its attempt to reconcile varying aspects of conventional and liberal thought breaks down, and reality intrudes upon the world which the educational fable must inhabit if it is to succeed in outlining a matriarchy of power.

Faced with poverty, disease, death, and corruption, the conventional mind could retain its composure and comfort itself with traditional religious explanations for misery. The liberal mind could only analyze and condemn the human corruption that resulted in such misery and invent hypothetical or future societies in which it would be eliminated. Faced with a choice between the inadequacy of conventional thought to convey or even to comprehend injustice and the impotence of reason to effect its cure, Wollstonecraft is forced into a precarious balancing act.

On the one hand, there is Trueman; on the other, Mason. They are both creations of the same mind: they inhabit the same book and, within the book, the same neighbourhood; each takes an active interest in girls' education; each represents one facet of the ideal woman. Each is, in effect, one half of the author's mind. But despite the fact that they are meant to respect one another, there is no common ground between the two: one cannot imagine them having a conversation--and neither, evidently, could Wollstonecraft, for at no point in the book does she show either of them directly addressing the other.

The inability to reconcile the truth of Trueman's world with that of Mason's was for Wollstonecraft tantamount to an admission of failure. She may have recognized human limitations in general and her own in particular, but she did not possess the kind of mind that could accept them with grace or humility. Given her temperament, she had three choices. She could accept her inability to reconcile opposing truths as a personal failure--a poverty of imagination or literary skill or a lack of intellectual courage. This she was not willing to do. Second, if she could forgo the comfort and safety of the conventional, religious justification of misery, she could reject it altogether and put her faith in reason and her energy into political reform. This she was not yet ready to do. Or third, she could adhere to convention and religion and argue that the fault was not with the system of reasoning they produced, but with those individuals who corrupted it by claiming the privileges of their station while ignoring its responsibilities. This she did.

It was, of course, the conventional solution--and particularly the conventional feminine one--to the problem of evil. But consciously or unconsciously, Original Stories takes it beyond its usual deployment as a strategy, by focussing the hostility arising out of personal disappointment at having to thus compromise not on wayward examples of individual irresponsibility, but on the ruling class as a whole, the one group (almost exclusively male) who had been granted sufficient power to be able to willfully abuse it. The effect of such a strategy or solution is to add what might be called a third narrative voice to the structure of Original Stories. This third voice is what I have referred to previously as the book's undertone; it is not used to mediate between Trueman and Mason, but to comment on the discrepancy between theory (be it conventional or liberal) and fact or reality as Wollstonecraft sees it in her most bitter and angry mood. It is the voice of the author herself, who, finding full expression in neither of her two major characters, retreats to an almost nihilistic pose which is directly at odds with both Trueman and Mason and thus in fact with the surface of the book as a whole.

NOTES

[1] Quotations within the sentence are from The Analytical Review, rev. of Original Stories by M.W., December 1788, pp. 478-79.

[2] "To Joseph Johnson", [late 1787/early 1788], Letter 69, C.L. of M.W., p. 167 (her emphasis).

[3] Godwin, Memoirs, p. 46.

[4] Godwin, Memoirs, p. 46.

[5] The one exception to the basically impersonal subject matter of Original Stories is "The History of the Village School-Mistress" (pp. 64f) which bears some similarity to Wollstonecraft's view of her own family relationships; it is the story of a high-spirited, extravagant, and impulsive father, a weak but amiable mother worn down by the increasingly heavy burdens of debt incurred by the father's sense of honour, and a daughter who had inherited her father's spirit of independence and her mother's religious principles. But even here Wollstonecraft retains control of the impersonal narrative voice, letting the "facts" as she has outlined them more or less speak for themselves, and consequently, the emotional turmoil and conflict, and much of the insight, that normally accompanies her description of family relationships is strikingly absent.

[6] M.W., Thoughts, pp. 152-53.

[7] From a series of very short reviews--the last initialled M--in The Analytical Review, April 1789, p. 469 (her emphasis).

[8] Quotations within the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., p. 4.

[9] M.W., Or. St., p. 78.

[10] M.W., Or. St., p. 79.

[11] Wollstonecraft would like to maintain that the guilty feel guilty simply because they are guilty; that is, because man instinctively knows right from wrong and is as naturally offended by a wrong in himself as one in another. She is aware, however, that while such an idea conforms to her own philosophical beliefs about human nature, it cannot always be said to be supported by experience and observation in the real world. Thus, she is forced to retreat to the position that while man's natural moral perceptions may be so corrupted that they can no longer be said to function naturally, guilt must still be the result of an immoral action for utilitarian, if not strictly-speaking for moral,

reasons. Her attempt to explain the necessary existence of guilt is at times naive, almost simple-minded; at others psychologically sophisticated, as in the case of Lady Sly (see pp. 21-25) who can never rest easy because, supposing everyone to be as selfish and greedy as she herself is, she becomes the slave of a suspicion that borders on paranoia.

[12] Quotations within the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., pp. 8, 7, and 5 respectively.

[13] M.W., Or. St., p. 77; the quotation marks are part of the original and would seem to indicate Wollstonecraft was quoting, but I have not been able to identify the source.

[14] Godwin, Memoirs, p. 32.

[15] O'Malley, p. 158.

[16] Since the mid-1970s the popularity of theorists like Rudolf Dreikurs has been on the rise and the popularity of permissiveness would seem to have been on the decline; it will be interesting to see if these "new" theories--which are in fact very similar to Rousseauan concepts of discipline by natural consequences and to the Lockean belief in habit formation--will have any influence on the evaluation of the work of Mary Wollstonecraft and other eighteenth-century educationists who have been dismissed as too harsh, by the advocates of permissiveness which now itself appears to be losing credibility.

[17] Wardle, M.W., p. 88.

[18] Wardle, M.W., p. 91.

[19] Quotations within the sentence are from Wardle, M.W., p. 89.

[20] The Saturday Review, September 1906, p. 294, as quoted in Janet M. Todd, Mary Wollstonecraft: An Annotated Bibliography (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), p. 104.

[21] Published in Posthumous Works, the "Lessons" are the only surviving part of a series of children's books which Wollstonecraft intended to write and died before she could finish.

[22] George, p. 79.

[23] Tomalin, p. 80.

[24] Sunstein, p. 164.

[25] Quotations within the paragraph are from M.W., Or. St., pp. 3, 4, 16, 22, 9, 13, and 13 respectively; see pp. 21-25 for the story of Lady Sly.

[26] M.W., Or. St., p. 79.

[27] Quotations within the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., p. 26.

[28] E.V. Lucas, Introduction to Original Stories by M.W. (London: Henry Frowde, 1906), pp. xii-xiii.

[29] M.W., Introduction to Or. St., n. pag.

[30] M.W., Or. St., p. 48 and M.W., Mary, p. 56.

[31] M.W., Mary, p. 64.

[32] M.W., Mary, p. 55; resignation, in fact, belongs not only to Mason but to every "good" character in Original Stories, and just as the rights of sentiment were carried to an extreme in Mary so is resignation carried to ludicrous lengths in the Stories. Perhaps the best example of this is Honest Jack, who loses one eye and the use of both legs in his attempt to save others and praises God's infinite mercy and justice for having "rewarded" him by leaving him one good eye (see pp. 34-37).

[33] M.W., Or. St., p. 61; cf. Mary, p. 67.

[34] M.W., Mary, p. 68.

[35] M.W., Or. St., p. 61.

[36] M.W., Or. St., p. 72.

[37] M.W., V.R.W., p. 51.

[38] M.W., Or. St., p. 40.

[39] M.W., Or. St., p. 8 (her emphasis).

[40] M.W., Or. St., p. 51 (her emphasis).

[41] The Analytical Review, August 1789, p. 411.

[42] All quotations in the sentence are from The Analytical Review, August 1789, p. 411.

[43] M.W., Preface to Or. St., p. xviii.

[44] This insistence plays some part in Mason's admonitions to the girls about respecting Nature, but strictly-speaking Nature plays more of an educational role in Mary than in Original Stories. In general, Wollstonecraft, following Rousseau, is fond of metaphors which base themselves upon the idea that the individual soul sees in Nature a reflection of what it feels or sees about itself. Such metaphors often contain the powerful or lyrical aspect of Wollstonecraft's prose which leads to her being compared to Wordsworth and other Romantics. Original Stories, like all her work, contains examples--although fewer than Mary--of this sensitivity to the relationship between the individual's perception of Nature and his emotional state. For example, explaining her past, Mason says: "I lost a darling child ... in the depth of winter--death had before deprived me of her father, and when I lost my child--he died again. The wintry prospects suiting the temper of my soul, I have sat looking at a wide waste of trackless snow for hours; and the heavy sullen fog, that the feeble rays of the sun could not pierce, gave me back an image of my mind. I was unhappy, and the sight of dead nature accorded with my feelings--for all was dead to me" (p. 72).

[45] The tutor is also, of course, found in Locke, but in Rousseau, his function is more fully developed and seen as independent of parents in a way that is not true in Locke. It should, however, be noted that Rousseau recommends male tutors and only male tutors. Education, for him, is too serious a business to be left to women. Wollstonecraft, throughout her career, persisted in appropriating theories designed for the education of boys only and applying them to the education of girls. In her century's eyes, it was one of her more disconcerting habits; but on the topic of tutors she had a good deal of female company for the tutor principle appealed to a great many women writers, who blithely borrowed it from Rousseau and ignored his specific application of it.

[46] M.W., The Analytical Review, May 1789, p. 97.

[47] M.W., Or. St., p. 1.

[48] M.W., Preface to Or. St., n. pag.

[49] M.W., Preface to Or. St., p. xviii.

[50] M.W., Mary, p. 12.

[51] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Introduction to Or. St., n. pag.; Wollstonecraft's distrust of servants was shared equally by both Locke and Rousseau and also by most other eighteenth-century educators, and warnings about the dangers of letting children associate with servants were so common that they could almost be

considered mandatory in any educational tract. Wollstonecraft even preferred parents to servants, which shows just how vehement her feelings on this topic were.

[52] Locke, Essay, p. 117.

[53] Locke, Essay, p. 120.

[54] M.W., Or. St., p. 63.

[55] M.W., V.R.W., p. 125.

[56] M.W., Or. St., p. 54.

[57] M.W., Or. St., pp. 54-55.

[58] Rauschenbusch-Clough, p. 27.

[59] M.W., Or. St., p. 23.

[60] Flexner, p. 93.

[61] M.W., Preface to Or. St., p. xviii.

[62] Quotations in the sentence are from Gabriel Compayré, Jean Jacques Rousseau: An Education from Nature (1907), rpt. Burt Franklin Research and Source Work Series 877, Philosophy Monograph Series 86, trans. R.P. Jago (New York: Burt Franklin, 1971), p. 111.

[63] Sarah Kirby Trimmer, Fabulous Histories Designed for the Instruction of Children Respecting their Treatment of Animals (1786) in Fabulous Histories and The Dairyman's Daughter, Classics of Children's Literature, Garland Series, gen. ed. Alison Lurie and Justin G. Schiller, Fabulous Histories introd. Ruth Perry (New York and London: Garland Publishing, facsimile reproduction, 1977), p. 13; hereafter cited as F.H.

[64] See Hester Chapone, The Works of Mrs. Chapone, Containing Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady: And Miscellanies in Prose and Verse, 2 vols. (Dublin: United Company of Booksellers, 1775), I, 57; Letters was originally published in London in 1773, Miscellanies in London in 1775, the 1775 Dublin edition was the first to bind and publish them together.

[65] Anna L. Barbauld, Advertisement to Lessons for Children [1779], rpt. (London: Scott, Webster, and Geary, 1843), p. 4.

[66] Ruth Perry, Preface to Fabulous Histories, by Sarah Kirby Trimmer, in Fabulous Histories and The Dairyman's Daughter (publication info. given in n. 63).

[67] Mrs. Pinchard, Preface to The Blind Child (1791), as quoted in Gillian Avery, Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories, 1780-1900, assisted by Angela Bull (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965), p. 14.

[68] The objection to fairy tales has damned eighteenth-century children's literature in the eyes of modern criticism; this will be discussed later, but it is worth noting at this point that feminine suspicion of fairy tale influence was not solely based on possible fantasy-reality confusions in the child's mind, but also on the brutality, violence, and vulgarity too often (in women writers' opinion) found in the old stories. In this respect, eighteenth-century women writers' antagonism to folk myth is similar in both tone and content to the modern concern with children watching television.

[69] Hannah More, Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies (London: J. Wilkie and T. Cadell, 1777), p. 152.

[70] Trimmer, F.H., p. 226.

[71] Dorothy Kilner, Preface to The Village School or a Collection of Entertaining Histories for the Instruction of All Good Children, 2 vols. (London: J. Marshall, 1785), I, v-vi.

[72] Chapone, I, 41.

[73] M.W., Preface to Or. St., p. xix.

[74] Perry, p. xiii.

[75] Charles Lamb, "To Samuel Coleridge", as quoted in Paul Heins, Introduction to Crosscurrents of Criticism: Horn Book Essays, 1968-1977, ed. Paul Heins (Boston: The Horn Book, Inc., 1977), p. viii.

[76] Charles Lamb, "To Samuel Coleridge", as quoted in F.J. Harvey Darton, Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life (1932; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 131.

[77] Paul Hazard, Books, Children and Men (1932), 3rd ed. of Engl. trans., trans. Marguerite Mitchell (Boston: Horn Book, Inc., 1947), p. 37.

[78] Percy Muir, English Children's Books, 1600-1900 (1954; rpt.

Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 82.

[79] Both quotations in the sentence are from Margaret C. Gillespie, History and Trends, ed. Pose Lamb (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1970), p. 84.

[80] Bettina Hürlimann, Three Centuries of Children's Books in Europe (1959), 2nd. ed. (1963) trans. and ed. Brian W. Alderson (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. xii.

[81] Cornelia Meigs, "Roots in the Past" in A Critical History of Children's Literature: A Survey of Children's Books in English (1953) by Cornelia Meigs, et al., Rev. ed. Cornelia Meigs, ed. (London: MacMillan, 1969), pp. 68 and 66 respectively.

[82] All quotations in the sentence are from Mary F. Thwaite, From Primer to Pleasure in Reading: An Introduction to the History of Children's Books in England from the Invention of Printing to 1914 with an Outline of Some Developments in Other Countries (London: The Library Association, 1972), pp. 70 and 79.

[83] May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books (1947), 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1964), p. 42.

[84] Quotations in paragraph are from Darton, pp. 169, 174 and 181 respectively.

[85] Muir, p. 84.

[86] Meigs, p. 67.

[87] See Gillian Avery, assisted by Angela Bull, Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories, 1780-1900 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965) and also her Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction, 1770-1950 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975).

[88] Moers, p. 215.

[89] Quotations in the sentence are from Moers, pp. 211, 223 and 230.

[90] Moers, p. 236.

[91] Quotations in the sentence are from Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, pp. 81 and 86.

[92] Darton, p. 203.

[93] All quotations in the sentence are from M.W., rev. of Sandford and Merton, Vol. III, by Thomas Day, The Analytical Review, October 1789, pp. 217-18.

[94] The Analytical Review, October 1789, p. 217.

[95] The Analytical Review, August 1788, p. 477.

[96] Moers, p. 226.

[97] The fact that Day was writing about the education of boys and Wollstonecraft girls has no bearing on the question of influence, for the essence of Rousseauan masculinity is self-reliance, and Wollstonecraft believed it to be as necessary to the female as the male character.

[98] See Trimmer, F.H., p. 150; cf. M.W., Or. St., p. 38.

[99] See Lucus, p. ix for one example.

[100] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., p. 77.

[101] M.W., Or. St., pp. 75-76.

[102] M.W., Or. St., p. 24.

[103] M.W., Or. St., p. 29 (conscious worth is my emphasis; truth, Wollstonecraft's).

[104] M.W., Or. St., p. 20.

[105] M.W., Or. St., p. 3.

[106] M.W., Or. St., p. 7.

[107] M.W., Or. St., p. 33.

CHAPTER V

ORIGINAL STORIES: SEXUAL POLITICS AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Feminist Anger and The Politics of Religion

On the surface, Original Stories is a children's book written to persuade children to adopt the ways of virtue. But to persuade children to virtue and to instruct parents and teachers on how to conduct the process of education so that it will result in virtue, one must first understand the concept itself. Accordingly, Original Stories attempts to analyze the nature of goodness, and part of this attempt consists of juxtaposing conventional and liberal, domestic and social, feminine and masculine, Lockean and Rousseauan definitions of virtue against each other. This juxtaposition is evident not only in the book's placing of Trueman and Mason (its two major characters) in relation to one another, but also in its Preface which argues, on one hand, that religion and habit formation are the foundations of virtue and, on the other, that should religion and habit formation not be enough reason will come to the rescue. But there is yet another voice in the Preface, one which despairs at the thought of the greed and selfishness which seem to dominate society and one which doubts the possibility of educating at all. And it is this third voice which controls the shape of the book, for not only does Original Stories fail to integrate the various definitions of virtue it proposes, but its whole exploration of the question is set against a background of dark forboding chaos which mocks the pathetic attempts of its characters to establish moral order.

As is particularly clear in the stories narrated by Mason, but authored less by her calm self-possession than by Wollstonecraft's almost nihilistic sense of the injustice prevalent in the world, Original Stories is intended to be a work of pathos. It is not, however, the pathos of sentiment (although this too is present) but a pathos built on despair and anger. The prescribed cure for despair was religion, and in both her life and her books Wollstonecraft made use of the appropriate and required religious precepts to try to argue herself into a state of quiet acquiescence. But anger, to begin with an unacceptable response in a woman especially when based (as Wollstonecraft knew her own to be) on self-assertion and defiance, was another matter. Suppress it as she would, it refused to be argued away or even confined to her private life. It colours all her work and none more fiercely than Original Stories.

To the degree that Wollstonecraft's anger changes the focus of ideas already discussed, Original Stories may be said to be both feminist and radical in execution if not in conscious design. The true extent of its feminist anger is forcibly revealed by its conspicuous failure to present positive or moral male characters to counterbalance the feminine moral presence,[1] and conscious or not, the anti-male bias in Original Stories is stronger than anything that surfaces in Wollstonecraft's explicitly feminist work.

In Original Stories it is not a man but a woman who represents both morality and reason. Mason is the only character in the book who is reliable, who simultaneously possesses the power of reason, the goodness of religion, and the wealth, independence, and will to put the dictates of reason and morality into practice. The book makes it clear that Caroline and Mary have been sent to Mason not for maternal love and care but for an education in reason and that to be properly educated they have had to be removed from their wealthy father. Moreover, the girls' father is only one of many men whom Original Stories implies should be stripped of privilege, power, and position, because they are neither morally nor mentally equipped to handle responsibility. In this sense, Original Stories is about tyrannical landlords, husbands who literally drive their wives insane, gentlemen who weep over sentimental novels but do not pay their bills and thus drive the shopkeeping class to ruin, and the same gentlemen, now fathers, still congratulating themselves on their tender feelings, who cannot provide for their families and who sacrifice their children--and especially their daughters--to their own vanity in the name of honour or keeping up appearances in Society. It is in fact a book about male tyranny and male incompetence.

Even the dangers of excessive sensibility are presented in Original Stories through masculine characters,[2] and the male characters in the book look all the worse for the inevitable comparison between their brutality or simple incompetence and feminine morality and efficiency. In the world as presented by Wollstonecraft, the Good Mother and the Dedicated Teacher are symbols of sanity. What makes Original Stories different in this respect from other women's educational fables is not the idea itself, but the intensity with which it is embodied in the book, for the essence of the feminine moral tale was not only the moral superiority of women, but the power such superiority might entail. But Original Stories presents Trueman and Mason against a backdrop of such dark pessimism that it outweighs them and makes them seem pathetically and ineffectually at odds with reality instead of showing them coldly manipulating and controlling it. Their attempts are noble, but futile. They are not the great ruling queens of feminine fiction, but powerless figureheads to whom respect, admiration, and even worship are nevertheless due, not because of what they achieve but because of what they represent. They do not conquer male tyranny; they cannot really reverse male brutality or cure male moral impotence; they merely stand apart and refuse to be implicated in it.

Original Stories does not argue that all men are either stupid or bad, but it does seem to depict all rich men as inevitably illogical or immoral in one sense or another and to portray poor men as being as helpless and ineffectual as women themselves. On the one hand, then, Original Stories is a book about women made helpless by forced reliance on powerless or corrupt men; on the other, it is about men crippled, impoverished, or driven crazy by forced reliance on the good will of the powerful. Those men portrayed sympathetically are therefore victims, much as women are. It is a bitter vision, a revolutionary's pessimism, which can see nothing but exploitation and oppression extending down the Great Chain of Being in proportion to the power granted by the "accidental advantage"[3] of rank and sex.

Original Stories is a chronicle of victimization, and all its victims (male or female) depend on Mason's benevolence for whatever relief they do receive. In turn, this benevolence depends on Mason's morality, justice, reason, not to mention her independent wealth. Mason is Wollstonecraft's way, and the strongest one of which she could conceive, of expressing her total confidence in women's moral superiority and in their reasoning powers. It should not, however, be misconstrued as an argument for women's rights. Original Stories believes that women must be morally independent, suggests that in general women are morally superior to men even if only because they do not have the power to perpetuate misery on a grand scale, and argues that a woman of superior abilities is not just superior to other women but to the common run of men as well. Nonetheless, the main thrust of its argument and the force of its anger is not political and economic (as it would be in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman), but religious and personal.

The social and political analysis implicit in Original Stories is, then, somewhere between the conventional and the radical. It fixes the blame for social ills on irresponsible individuals and recommends individual moral education as a cure; but it also implies that society as a whole is to blame for granting undue privileges to certain individuals in the first place and for neglecting to oversee the education of its citizens in the second. It is conventional in that it sees class and sex as being God's way of clearly defining the individual's place in society and feminine in that, unlike books written by men, it places more emphasis on the rewards entailed by womanly virtue than on the trials it must endure and seeks to enhance the importance of "good" women to society as a whole. It is, however, feminist in its angry suspicion that some kind of conspiracy was going on, that men were not living up to their part of the bargain between the sexes, that social and political institutions served to ensure the exploitation not only of women but also of the poor, that the ruling class had contrived to forget not only their duties to their fellowman but also had forgotten that in God's eyes all men--and all women--were equal.

When she wrote Original Stories Wollstonecraft still believed that religious solutions did not have to involve extensive social or political change; in other words, she still believed, or wanted to believe, in a system in which the poor, as long as they were content to remain poor, would be protected and women, as long as they played certain roles, would be cherished. But she could believe it only if she ignored the evidence all around her: to believe it was wish-fulfillment; to deny it was to despair. In allowing her anger and despair to colour the view of reality presented in Original Stories, in allowing herself to see that the system neither delivered the promised rewards for obedience nor functioned to obliterate misery, in allowing herself to recognize that women like Trueman and Mason could be little more than pale reflections of light in the shadowy blackness of reality, Wollstonecraft was undermining the stated aim of Original Stories and its relation to the women's educational and moral tale. She was, in effect, mocking herself, her own will to believe, and, indeed, her own beliefs.

The effect of this self-mockery is a certain kind of confusion which becomes apparent when the reader tries to work out what the overall point of Original Stories is supposed to be. Poverty is sometimes a moral challenge, a force for good; at others, a terrifying blight which cripples both body and mind and serves no good purpose, no useful function, whatsoever. Servants are alternately seen as vicious, superstitious, ignorant, and self-serving and as victims of oppression, members of a class whose very situation makes it almost impossible to retain human dignity or to aspire to true virtue (which by definition, for Wollstonecraft, is based on independence). Characters like Lady Sly are at once symbols of the idle, self-absorbed, greedy rich and of the woman who denied legitimate expression of her humanity and her desire for influence in work turns to illegitimate attempts to exercise power through feminine wiles and intrigue. When Mason announces that she "cannot bear to see a fellow-creature kneel",[4] the reader cannot tell whether Mason is merely being self-righteous or whether she is foreshadowing Wollstonecraft's later assertions about the absurdity of artificial barriers. The book's attitude towards marriage is similarly obscure. On one hand, there is Trueman's happy marriage; on the other, Mason's highly convenient widowhood. In one place Mason delivers a long lecture on how to hold a man's esteem (by being ready on time so he does not have to wait and by being elegantly turned out, thus avoiding the dangers of too much familiarity or intimacy)[5] and at another she dismisses the question of why a young girl would marry an old man whom she does not love with the scathing remark, "because she was timid".[6]

Paradoxically, these confusions unify or vitalize what could have been no more than a handful of clichés into a sincere and dynamic exploration of conflicts the author obviously feels as painfully real. The personal note in Original Stories is not as obvious as it was in Thoughts or Mary, but it works below the surface of plot and characterization as no mere technique could, and ironically as neither Wollstonecraft's belief in God nor her faith in reason can, to turn Original Stories into a genuinely complex little book. That Wollstonecraft attempts to repress her anger, subdue her revolutionary zeal, and restrain the tenor of her nihilism only causes her bitter despair to break out with all the more force for having been supressed and all the more impact for its shattering of the calm, restrained, and controlled surface of a book which purports to base its claims solely upon reason and religion.

Original Stories remains a conservative work, despite its occasional outbursts and despite its persistent undercutting of conventional attitudes, because it restricts the more radical components of its argument to criticism rather than venturing new solutions, and because it ultimately rejects political or social analysis in favour of religious explanation. It remains conservative, in other words, not because of what it says, but because of what it does not say, because it makes its points in ordinary eighteenth-century prose and not in revolutionary rhetoric, and because it does so within the traditionally feminine and conventionally religious context of a children's book and not in a polemic with the inflammatory title The Rights of Woman. As Wollstonecraft herself said, most people are far "too vain to mind what is said in a book for children",[7] and the eighteenth century's reception of Original Stories proved her right.

Original Stories was written within a year of Wollstonecraft's return from Ireland where she had been employed as a governess by Lord and Lady Kingsborough. One hears in the book the voice of the governess, full of criticism, just and unjust, criticism founded on close observation and on personal resentment, as well as on a growing concept of social and political injustice; a governess criticizing the frivolity, triviality, and immorality of the aristocracy; but, still, a governess, one who knew her place and was determined to keep it. A governess who indulges her desire to criticize her "betters" (not to mention her employers) will soon find herself out of a job (as indeed Wollstonecraft did), but a governess who attacked the general social order could soon have found herself a complete outcast, and this Wollstonecraft was not yet ready to risk.

To speak her mind and yet retain her standing in society (such as it was), Wollstonecraft required an acceptable excuse for publishing criticisms of her "superiors". It was, as she knew, not to be found in politics, but in religion. That she, at least in part and with sincerity, believed that the truly religious person did not seek to change his place in society, but to improve himself in the eyes of God and prepare himself for heaven, made the religious rationale she adopted not only convenient but natural. By instinct or education, Wollstonecraft's religion was synonymous with an active and passionate desire for improvement, and the religious impulse in her was strong enough to demand translation into practice of one kind or another. And if the bite characteristic of *Original Stories* developed out of Wollstonecraft's personal feelings, those feelings were, for her, justified by a genuinely religious conviction that every human being had equal value in the eyes of God and that *any* attempt to deny this was in defiance of His Will. Thus, the bitterness of *Original Stories* is not merely an expression of its author's personal disappointment, but includes and, indeed, is based upon the distaste those who believe in a better world and who believe in man's God-given capacity to improve must feel upon contemplation of the world as it is.

In *Original Stories* Wollstonecraft uses religion to curb her own anger, to justify her criticisms of others, to provide an intellectual framework for her recommendations for moral reform, and to simultaneously advance and restrain her argument for women's independence. The religion of *Original Stories* is, by and large and certainly in the sense of a codified system of belief, the religion of Richard Price.[8] That the book chooses to make use of the ideas of a man whose religion was his politics and whose politics were decidely liberal, if not actually revolutionary, was no coincidence.

The Moral and Political Philosophy of Richard Price

Born in 1723, Richard Price was educated at the dissenting academies, ordained to the Presbyterian ministry in 1744, resided and preached in Newington Green for nearly thirty years or most of his adult life, and died in 1791. He was a Welshman by birth, a clergyman by profession, a scholar of far-ranging interests by inclination, and, by all accounts, a singularly personable man. His simplicity, kindliness, and quiet charm won many friends; his intellectual abilities excited admiration; his tolerance ensured friendships with men like Priestley, John Bonnycastle, despite his public disavowals of some of their opinions; and his moral integrity evoked almost universal respect, despite the unpopularity of some of his own views.

Outside the formal discipline of philosophy, where he is evaluated in terms of his contributions to rationalist epistemology and ethics, Price is best remembered today not as a mathematician, economist, historian, theologian, or even moral philosopher (all of which he was), but as "an apostle of liberty" or "torchbearer of freedom".[9]

Price's Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government and the Justice and Policy of the War with America was published in 1776, followed a year later by his Additional Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty, and the War with America, and some eight years later in 1784 by his Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution and the Means of Making it a Benefit to the World. Throughout all three treatises, Price's conclusions on the war with America remained consistently simple and direct. His attitude, in Bernard Peach's words, was this: he "was a loyal subject of Great Britain who thought the British were wrong, not only prudentially, financially, economically, militarily, and politically, but, above all, morally wrong".[10]

Despite the simplicity of his conclusions on the topic, the process by which Price reasoned to such conclusions was anything but simple, for he based his argument upon what might be called a religious view of reason, a view which involved him in complex theological, epistemological, and ethical analysis. Unlike Edmund Burke, who also believed Great Britain should withdraw from the war and grant America independence, Price did not appeal to either historical precedent or present expediency, but to the abstract principles from which Burke was determined to dissociate himself. The difference in the two men's views would become explicit between 1789 and 1791 when Price would support and Burke condemn the French Revolution.

Price's religion and his view of God, his belief in reason and perfectibility, and his assumption that liberty (individual or civil) was a prerequisite for true virtue were beliefs basic to his moral philosophy as a whole, beliefs which determined his political principles and from which his political principles derive their importance. Price's "translation of his moral into a political philosophy" was, in the eyes of many critics, not only important, but "original".[11] It is relevant here, not only because Price's moral philosophy provides the intellectual framework in which Original Stories is placed and in which it must be read to be understood, but more importantly because Price's insistence that any given action or idea (political or otherwise) must ultimately be measured not by expedience or precedent or even desirability or the common good, but by the objective and necessary existence of right and wrong, helps to elucidate Wollstonecraft's own transformation from moral to political philosopher.

Some twenty years before Price entered the political arena with his publications on the American Revolution, he had begun work on his philosophical enquiries into the nature of virtue. His *Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals* was first published in 1758 when he was thirty-five, corrected and reissued under the same title in 1769, and further modified and reissued again in 1787 under the shortened title *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals*. The purpose of his book, as he outlined it in his Introduction, was "to trace the obligations of virtue up to the truth and the nature of things, and these to the Deity".[12] It was a deceptively simple statement of the *Review*'s design, and the problems he encountered in executing it are to some extent revealed by the changes he made in the text between its first and third editions. The ethical system outlined in the *Review* remained constant, but in the second and third editions Price revised and expanded upon his metaphysical and epistemological tenets, making it clear that as time passed he came more and more to believe that his moral system depended for its validity or justification upon a painstaking delineation of the origin of our ideas or the means by which we are capable of perceiving truth.

Price's epistemology had been influenced by Locke, Cudworth, and Clarke, and it is not clear whether his *Review* should be read as a refutation of Locke or, as Peach suggests, as merely an alternative interpretation of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.[13] While Price's quarrel with the *Essay* may have been to some degree semantical, his response to the empiricists (notably Hutcheson and Hume) who had followed and developed "the new philosophy"[14] clearly was not:

> ... I cannot help considering it as some reproach to human reason, that, by the late controversies,

> and the doubts of some of the wisest men, it should be rendered necessary to use many arguments to shew, that right and wrong, or moral good and evil, signify somewhat really true of actions, and not merely sensations.[15]

The Review goes on to claim that if Hutcheson's moral sense were to be taken seriously then good, like beautiful, would become only a quality in the eye of the beholder, virtue merely "an affair of taste", and truth and morality no more than "vision and fancy".[16] Likewise, pursuing Hume's assertion that "all our ideas are either impressions, or copies of impressions"[17] to its logical conclusion would end, or so Price argues, "in the destruction of all truth and the subversion of our intellectual faculties",[18] end by plunging us into "an abyss of scepticism".[19] In opposition to Hutcheson and Hume, to both empiricism and scepticism, Price set out to disprove the basic tenets of empiricist epistemology, to refute scepticism by establishing what he calls "the grounds of belief",[20] and "to show that moral judgments are objective, and the facts denoted by them are necessarily true".[21]

Price's epistemological arguments cannot be presented in any great detail here. It is sufficient to note that he opposed empiricism with rationalism. Or in other words, like Hutcheson he believed that man could immediately discern right from wrong, but while Hutcheson attributed this ability to an innate moral sense, Price attributed it to the mind, the "power within us which is superior to sense". The faculty "which views and compares the objects of all the senses" cannot itself, he argued, "be sense". He did not, of course, deny that ideas are derived from sensory experience, but he did hold that it was not possible for all ideas to derive from sense: sense "presents particular forms to the mind; but cannot rise to any general ideas". While Price did not subscribe to a theory of innate ideas, he did refuse to believe that reason could be confined within "the narrow limits of *sense*, *fancy*, or *experience*" and, on the contrary, asserted that the understanding "though not the first in time" was "the most important source of our ideas".[22]

In Price's view many of our ideas originate in sensory impressions, but "the human understanding, however it may be preceded by sensible impressions, and be supplied by them with the first *occasions* of exerting itself, is a faculty infinitely superior to all the powers of sense ...."[23] Thus, "independently of experience" the understanding "can demonstrate innumerable truths concerning many objects, of which otherwise we must have been for ever ignorant".[24] There were, in Price's opinion, three sources of knowledge beyond the sensory. The first was "immediate consciousness or feeling";[25] the second, intuition; and the third, argumentation or deduction. The most important of these was intuition. In his attempt to prove "the objective content of the moral consciousness",[26] Price argues that the mind is capable of apprehending, immediately discerning, or intuiting moral principles with clearness and distinctness. Moral principles, ideas of right and wrong, were self-evident, in the same manner that certain mathematical or geometric propositions were self-evident, known in the way that certain principles of physics (causation, impenetrability, space, duration) were known. As in Descartes, the evident is for Price "recognized by the natural light", and 'first principles' are by definition "so clear that any attempt to prove them would only obscure them".[27] In Price's own words, "we shall find ourselves obliged to terminate our views in a *simple perception*, and something *ultimately approved* for which no justifying reason can be assigned" or "some truths there must be, which can appear only by their own light, and which are incapable of proof".[28]

Right and wrong are thus perceived by the understanding, by which Price means intuition or

> ... the mind's survey of its own ideas, and the relations between them, and the notice it takes of what is or is not true and false, consistent and inconsistent, possible and impossible in the natures of things. It is to this ... we owe our belief of all self-evident truths; our ideas of the general, abstract affections and relations of things; our moral ideas, and whatsoever else we discover, without making use of any process of reasoning.[29]

Intuition in this sense is not the "mystical faculty"[30] it would become for the Romantics; nor is it to be confused with sensibility's quick feelings, simple instinct, common usage of the term, nor reasoning in the sense of analysis or deduction, any more than with Hutcheson's moral sense. Intuition for Price, as for Descartes, was "an act of the pure and attentive intelligence sprung from the natural light of reason alone".[31] It was not based on a well of innate ideas, but on "a capacity innate to the human intellect".[32] In his arguments for rationalism and in his reliance upon mathematical truths to support his epistemology, Price is very like Descartes. In point of fact, he did not draw his arguments from Descartes, but from Plato's Theaetetus; nonetheless, he was "the first to apply the word 'intuition' to moral judgment", and, according to D. Daiches Raphael, the editor of the 1948 reprint of the Review, Price's "contribution to epistemology is to reaffirm the Cartesian view against empiricism and to show (or allege) that Cartesian intuition has its place in the epistemology of morals".[33]

Price's epistemological argument concludes in three interlocking or mutually interdependent assertions. First, that "morality is eternal and immutable", part of "necessary truth" or objective reality; therefore, moral judgments do not depend solely on human feelings nor change "with the force and liveliness of our feelings", but instead denote something real in the action or agent being judged.[34] Second, that morality is eternal and immutable, because it is part of the immutable nature of God, and further (and here Price radically departs from the Cartesian view) the primary characteristic in God's nature is not Will but Reason: "His nature admits of nothing arbitrary or instinctive, of no determinations which are independent of reason, or which cannot be accounted for by it".[35] And third, that a reasonable God creating a rational creature, not for His own sake but out of "a disposition to communicate bliss",[36] is, nonetheless, bound (i.e., His Will is bound by another part of His Nature, that being His Reason) to the rational principles of distributive justice. Thus, God ultimately will grant happiness only to the virtuous, and because this is true, the self-evident principles of justice require that man be capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. Thus God has provided (and was bound to provide) man with an innate love of truth and goodness and the means of apprehending truth and goodness. That means is reason or intuition, what Wollstonecraft would call "the heaven-lighted lamp in man".[37]

Price's epistemology can be separated from his theology and stand on its own, but, as Price never intended it should have to, he made little attempt to set his epistemological argument apart from his belief in "the necessary GOODNESS of the divine nature".[38] The same may be said of his system of ethics—that is, epistemological scepticism and/or atheism are not necessarily incompatible with moral intuitionism, and Price's moral system, divorced from both epistemology and theology, can stand on its own and still provide internally consistent justifications for its moral positions. However, it is clear that in Price's own opinion the validity of his moral philosophy was dependent upon both his rationalist epistemology and his religious beliefs. In other words, his belief that a man's duty consisted of following his own intuition rested upon his particular view of the necessary relationship between man's mind and God's nature.[39]

Price, then, believed in a loving but just God, who had created man in His own image, making the love of right, the abhorrence of evil, and the ability to discern between good and evil a necessary part of man's understanding.[40] He believed in a God, who being perfect Himself, had provided man not only with an innate love of truth, but also with the ability to pursue it and infinitely perfect himself in the process.[41] Nonetheless, the moral system that evolved out of these beliefs was neither simple nor idealistic. Nor was it dogmatic, for, if Price believed in absolute principles of right and wrong, absolute principles did not for him presuppose rigidly simple answers to complex human problems. On the contrary, Price's theological beliefs combined with a thorough knowledge of the world, a strong predisposition to observation, and an unusually honest and perceptive mind to lead to a rigorously analytical approach to moral problems and the subsequent development of a complex system of ethics which was innovative or original in several respects.

Right was for Price a simple indefinable idea that had no justification beyond itself: we ought to do right, simply because it was right. Even the claim that right was fit to be done because God so willed it was, in Price's opinion, at best a tautological and misleading argument and at worst a falsification of both divine and human nature. The idea of right was original to the moral consciousness and no more derived from God's Will than from man's sensory experience. Thus, in determining the right course of action, every man was forced to rely upon his own reason or conscience. The simple perception of right obligated a man to do right; in other words, once a man had seen the right course of action, he was obliged to undertake it, to obey the dictates of his conscience, to put into practice the commands of his reason; and he would be justifiably blameable if he did not. Moreover, a man was most certainly obliged to act upon his own idea of right despite public opinion and, to some extent, despite the consequences of the act; his virtue could only be judged, therefore, by the degree of conformity between his own idea of right and his translation of that idea into action.

Virtue was thus a question of personal moral integrity, and an individual's virtue could be determined only by determining the degree to which he had done what he thought he ought to do. Thus, the individual's motive for acting the way he had in fact acted was more important in terms of his virtue than either the consequences of his act or absolute standards of right and wrong. It is difficult to say with certainty whether these ideas, ideas which form the major claims of the Review, represent the starting point of Price's moral argument or the conclusions that his analysis of man's moral nature led him to adopt. In either case, the process by which he justified and/or arrived at these beliefs must be summarized in some detail if Price's view is to emerge with the kind of clarity that will allow its originality and grounds of its disagreement with both eighteenth-century utilitarianism and modern relativism to be seen and appreciated.

Contrary to the spirit of his age, Price denied any one principle (be it benevolence, enlightened self-interest, or even duty to God) could comprise the whole of virtue. Hutcheson had argued that benevolence, or concern for the welfare and happiness of others, was the foundation of virtue, and those few eighteenth-century moral philosophers who were not inclined to agree with him generally engaged in their own search for an alternative which, like Hutcheson's own, would reduce morality to the application of a single principle. Price viewed this search as proceeding out of a natural and even commendable desire for simplicity, but one which, unfortunately, all too often led not only to simple but to simplistic conclusions. As he had attacked Hutcheson's innate moral sense, because he felt it would inevitably undermine the true objectivity of moral good and evil, so he attacked the emphasis Hutcheson placed on benevolence, because he felt it led to moral judgments that concerned themselves far too much with the consequences of the act and not enough with the intentions of the individual doing the acting. *Overstating* the importance of speculating on the consequences of an action before deciding whether or not it was the correct thing to do was, for Price, to risk confusing utility with moral rectitude.

In Price's opinion, right was a broader concept than either private or public interest and could be subsumed within neither, while it could accommodate both. In short, while he admitted benevolence was "the most general and leading consideration of virtue"[42] and certainly believed that self-love was part of virtue, neither, in his view, could be the whole of it. A lie was still a lie and therefore wrong (he argued), even if it should prove more benevolent, more conducive to general happiness, than the truth; likewise, a prudent lie, one which did no harm to anyone and yet spared an individual considerable pain and inconvenience, was still a lie and still wrong, even if it should never be discovered and even if no harm (to the liar or to anyone else for that matter) *ever* came of it. A man who acted virtuously out of fear, rather than out of a regard for right, was not virtuous, but prudent, just as a man who concerned himself with his fellowman, but not with his Maker, was not virtuous, but only benevolent. Moreover, to argue that to be virtuous a man had only to consult his true self-interest was for Price to lay too great a burden on man's reasoning powers: no man could forsee the long-term consequences of any particular action he might take; and if he were to consult his short-term interests or his interest apart from any consideration of heaven and hell, it would obviously often be more truly in accord with self-interest to act viciously than to act virtuously. Similarly, says Price, to argue that to be virtuous a man need only consult the interests of others or the general public good was to ignore certain truths known by intuition and confirmed by experience; for example, the concept of good and ill desert was in no way dependent upon public utility or social consequences, demanding as it did that the greatest good, the greatest happiness, belonged _by right_ not to the greatest number, but to the greatest good.[43]

Arguments like those outlined above demonstrate the reasoning Price employed to undermine various attempts to reduce all moral good "to one particular species of it";[44] his own conclusions on the matter are expressed as follows:

> But why must there be in the human mind approbation only of one sort of actions? ... How unreasonable is that love of uniformity and simplicity which inclines men thus to seek them where it is so difficult to find them? It is this that, on other subjects, has often led men astray. What mistakes and extravagances in natural philosophy have been produced, by the desire of discovering _one_ principle which shall account for all effects?[45]

A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals postulates six major principles of virtue: (1) duty to God (2) duty to self or prudence

(3) benevolence or, as Price terms it, beneficience or "the study of the good of others" (4) gratitude (5) veracity and (6) justice.[46] Price refers to these six as "some of the most important Branches of virtue, or heads of rectitude and duty";[47] his phrasing ("some of the most important") testifies to his reluctance to certify his own conclusions as the final word on the matter. There are at least six heads of virtue, in his opinion, and there may be more. He is, however, equally careful to point out that virtue itself "is necessarily one thing" and "no part of it can be separated from another".[48] "This leads me to observe", he comments,

> ... that however different from one another the heads which have been enumerated are, yet, from the very notion of them, as heads of virtue, it is plain, that, they all run up to one general idea, and should be considered as only different modifications and views of one original, all-governing law.[49]

Thus far Price's analysis of virtue has been theoretical in the sense that it has concerned itself with the relationship between the nature of God and the structure of man's mind. In this light, virtue is a regard for right, right is absolute, and if it cannot be reduced to one principle it is still a unity that can be apprehended through the immediate discernment or intuiting of moral principles (like the six named above) which proceed from it, principles which can be used to judge any given action or the motive for it as right or wrong.

Price, however, realizes that man must apply absolute principles to particular contexts; given the weakness of human reason and the limits of human knowledge, the path of virtue practically-speaking often cannot be either immediately discerned or absolutely determined. Virtue (absolute or practical) is a regard for right, but while principles of right may be self-evident, simple, and infallible, the application of them to particular situations is not.[50] Moreover, Price's analysis is further complicated by his realization (and it was original on his part) that while our varying duties often coincide and require the same action, yet

> ... they often also interfere. Though upon the whole, or when considered as making one *general system or plan of conduct*, there is a strict coincidence between them, yet in examining *single acts* and *particular cases*, we find that they lead us contrary ways. --This perhaps has not been enough attended to, and therefore I shall particularly insist upon it.[51]

This interplay of duties--the various ways "different obligations combine with or oppose each other in particular cases"--forces us to rely not only on self-evident principles, but also on our imperfect "discerning faculties", and "we may thus be rendered entirely incapable of determining what we ought to chuse", says Price. "It cannot but happen", he continues, "that we should be frequently in the dark, and that different persons should judge differently, according to the different views they have of the several moral principles". In other words, while man's intuition is capable of immediately discerning right from wrong principles and knowing them with certainty, man cannot with anywhere near the same degree of certainty discern right from wrong courses of action in particular situations.[52]

When obligations conflict, prudence requiring one course of action, benevolence another, and justice or gratitude yet a third, man needs not only the moral principles intuited by the mind, but also its deductive or analytic powers to determine which of the obligations in the conflict should, in any given case, carry the greater weight. Moreover, if man is to undertake the painful process of weighing the relative claims of opposing duties, he must take care to protect his will to do right from corrupting influences, to pursue virtue for its own sake, and to accept that the most he can do is to do what he believes to be right. This is not absolute but practical virtue.

Despite the difficulties inherent in choosing the right course of action, man cannot simply refrain from choice or action for fear of being wrong. "[S]uch a resolution might itself", says Price, "prove the greatest crime, and fix upon us the greatest guilt".[53] Man must accept his obligation to do what he thinks ought to be done; the possibility that he might be mistaken cannot sanction his failure to do what he thinks is right: "what any being, in the sincerity of his heart, thinks he ought to do, he indeed ought to do, and would be justly blameable if he omitted to do it" even if it should prove to be absolutely wrong.[54] Practical or relative virtue thus has "a necessary relation to, and dependence upon, the opinion of the agent concerning his actions".[55] Abstract or absolute virtue, on the other hand, is a quality

> ... of the external action or event. It denotes what an action is, considered independently of the sense of the agent; or what, in itself and absolutely, it is right such an agent, in such circumstances, should do; and what, if he judged truly, he would judge he ought to do.[56]

Price carefully laid out the distinctions between absolute and practical virtue so that he could distinguish between the "virtue of the action" and the "virtue of the agent".[57] A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals insists that these two must be considered separately; the action may be right but the agent wrong; the action wrong but the agent right. Practical virtue or the virtue of the agent is thus a question of motive or intention and has nothing to do with the objective rightness or wrongness of the act. An agent deserves praise if he did what he believed he ought to do and deserves blame if anything but his opinion of right influenced his action. Nevertheless, as Price is careful to point out, practical moral judgments are no less real than absolute ones, and practical should not be confused with partial virtue.[58]

If practical virtue is "the conformity of our actions to the sincere convictions of our minds", it follows that if a man is to be moral he must be free to act upon what he believes. Thus, for Price, liberty is a prerequisite of virtue. Liberty in this context, as Price says, is "the power of acting and determining", and "it is self-evident, that where such a power is wanting, there can be no moral capacities". Price's analysis of the concept implies civil and political liberty, or what his age would have termed 'the rights of man', but is most directly concerned with psychological freedom or the refutation of psychological determinism. To this effect, Price argues that motives do not determine our actions, but are merely "the occasions of putting ourselves into motion". No motive can compel a man to act, for action is dependent only upon volition. Although philosophical sophistry can confuse the issue, every man at base, as his use of language cannot fail to reveal, believes in his own free will. Man is not determined by a collusion of factors in his past or in his nature, but if anything by his own actions, and this kind of determinism is self-chosen and not irrevocable.[59]

If a man needs to be free to be moral, he needs intelligence, the second prerequisite of virtue, no less. A man incapable of perceiving the difference between moral good and evil could not have a concept of right, not having it could not be expected to act upon it, and thus would be incapable of practical morality. Practical morality also relies on intelligence in particular situations where the ability to analyze and to reason deductively becomes part of the process of making moral choices. But if "Liberty and Reason constitute the capacity of virtue", it is "the intention that gives it actual being in a character". And it is in fact this third prerequisite--"the actual conformity of the wills of moral agents to what they see or believe to be the fitness of things" or the agent's "consciousness of rectitude" and his willingness to accept it as "his rule and end"--that distinguishes practical from partial virtue.[60]

To be practically virtuous a man must not only possess liberty and intelligence, he must use them to pursue right, and this is, at least in part, a function of the will. Man's virtue is practical and not absolute because of the limitations of his knowledge; but when it is partial instead of practical it signifies not a lack of knowledge but a weakness of will. A practically moral man always does what he believes to be right; a partially virtuous man either devotes himself to one duty at the expense of the rest or does what he believes to be right when it is convenient and does not give him too much trouble. Partial virtue, in Price's words, is "absurd"; it is "defective and inconsistent"; and if practical morality is to be kept from degenerating into partial virtue, man must love right above all else and pursue it religiously.[61]

What Price calls practical or relative morality is not relativism in the modern sense. Taken out of context, Price's injuctions on how to decide what to do can read like twentieth-century situational ethics, but Price himself is careful to place his relativism within an epistemological and theological framework which asserts the necessity of absolute truth. Supposing the existence of a reality independent of perception allows him to argue that the basic moral obligation of every man is to undertake a search for truth, to subject his motives and beliefs to the strictest scrutiny. It is self-evident to Price that because some men do this more conscientiously than others it is absolutely true that some men, some decisions, are better than others. "[V]oluntary ignorance" is "inexcusable", says Price, and "impartiality and honesty of mind in our enquiries after truth" are part of veracity, as is "the careful avoiding of all secret attempts to deceive ourselves, and to evade or disguise the truth in examining our own characters".[62]

In his own eyes at least, Price does not demand moral perfection from man. But, as the last third of his Review clearly demonstrates, he does demand a kind of attention and concern with moral matters that is far from ordinary. The complexity of virtue in this world, he concludes, is such that "the indolent and unthinking" cannot be truly virtuous, for what we "do not do" will be judged as surely as that which we do; that there is "the greatest reason for being careful of ourselves, and for narrowly watching and examining our hearts and lives"; that "a person who thinks himself good enough, may be sure that he is not good at all"; and that if men "would escape future condemnation, they must exercise vigilance, attention and zeal, and endeavour to be better than mankind in general are".[63]

Taken as a whole, Price's Review of the Principal Questions in Morals constitutes an argument for religious freedom: every man must approach God through his own reason and in matters of right and wrong must follow his own conscience. But given this stance, every decision becomes a moral question, and in arguing for religious freedom Price was, in fact, arguing for freedom in a far more general sense. Moreover, as his later publications on the American and French Revolutions would reveal, not only did his definition of virtue presuppose liberty, it presupposed courage, and more than anything else, Price's Review is the assertion that a man who loves virtue and seeks truth must possess the courage to stand by his convictions and to do so regardless of the consequences to himself and his personal happiness. This kind of courage is virtue and without it practical morality could not exist. But if courage is essential to virtue, so too is caution, and Price's ethics are simultaneously based upon doing what one believes to be right and an internal system of checks and balances, a rigorous reverence for truth, that prevents them from being open to the charge of encouraging any kind of excess, let alone license or anarchy:

> Our rule is to follow our consciences steadily and faithfully, after we have taken care to inform them in the best manner we can; and, where we doubt, to take the safest side, and not to venture to do any thing concerning which we have doubts, when we know there can be nothing amiss in omitting it; and, on the contrary, not to omit any thing about which we doubt, when we know there can be no harm in doing it.[64]

Price's conclusions on the possibility of virtue in this world are no less paradoxical than his belief in cautious courage. On one hand, he clearly believes in perfectibility: the moral principle, he says, is "capable of increase and advancement without end". In this optimistic mood, he argues that intellectual improvement invariably leads to moral progress and also that such progress confers a greater degree of personal happiness on the persons so improved. On the other, his very belief in perfectibility intensifies the discrepancy between the way the world should be and the way it appears to be, between absolute principles of right and reality. It is self-evident that the good should prosper and the bad suffer. It is equally evident (although Price was one of the first to admit it) that in this world not only does the villain prosper while the innocent often suffer, but also that regular indulgence in vice weakens the moral capacity and often leaves the truly guilty free even of self-doubt and recrimination, while the innocent, magnifying their every sin, imagine themselves guilty of a thousand wrongdoings, agonize over their misdeeds, destroy "many of the joys" that should attend "their integrity", and condemn themselves to a state of "perpetual distrust and terror".[65]

The world is so far from being in accord with principles of rectitude and justice that, in Price's opinion,

> Indeed, all things considered, this world appears fitted more to be a school for the education of virtue, than a station of honour to it; and the course of human affairs is favourable to it more by exercising it, than by rewarding it.[66]

It is a pessimistic conclusion which supposes a world and a God without rational order or justice, and as such it is a conclusion which Price cannot accept. Thus this incongruity between absolute principles and the chaotic rule of the social order becomes his justification for a belief in a world hereafter:

> If nothing is to be expected beyond this world, no suitable provision is made from many different cases amongst men; no remarkable manifestation is seen of the divine holiness; and the most noble and excellent of all objects, that on which the welfare of the creation depends, and which raises beings to the nearest resemblance of the Deity, seems to be left without any adequate support. Is this possible under the Divine government? Can it be conceived, that the wisdom and equity of providence should fail only in the instance of virtue? That here, where we should expect the exactest order, there should be the least?—But, acknowledge the reference of this scene to a future more important scene, and all is clear; every difficulty is removed, and every irregularity vanishes. A plain account offers itself of all the strange phænomena in human life. 'Tis of little consequence, how much at any time virtue suffers and vice triumphs here, if hereafter there is to be

> a just distinction between them, and every inequality is to be set right.[67]

Thus Price establishes the metaphor of the world as a school and God as a Father/Teacher ministering to the real needs of his children. In such a school, adversity is often the "best friend" of virtue, and it is right that virtue is not always immediately rewarded, for immediate reward would render it "interested and mercenary" and thus prevent the development of true virtue.[68] It is, to some degree, a standard religious explanation for evil in the world and from a Presbyterian minister hardly surprising. Price's explanation is, nevertheless, unusual in that it does not promise eternal bliss or unending heaven to the good (merely just retribution for their sufferings on earth) and also unusual in that it at no point assumes God's workings to be so mysterious that they are necessarily beyond the puny grasp of human reason.

Price was a rationalist, and for him things had to make sense, had to conform to the rules of logic and the rules of justice. His analysis of the nature of virtue is both clear and cogent; but his religious beliefs do complicate and, to some degree, obscure the immediate moral implications of his work, for his Review fails to make it clear whether man's energies were to be channelled into perfecting this world through social and political reform or whether they were to be subsumed into a religious vision which asserts the futility of placing too much hope in the present and the necessity of renouncing the problems of this world for the pleasures of the next.

Original Stories: A Pricean Moral Tract

The same dichotomies—courage and perfectibility on one hand, caution and renunciation of the world on the other--find their echo in Mary Wollstonecraft's Original Stories. Original Stories is in many ways an exercise in moral philosophy, and it is Wollstonecraft's use of Pricean ethics in the book that subjects her to the same rather paradoxical valuing of both prudence and reform and condemns her, much like Price himself, to alternating cycles of optimism and pessimism in regard to reason's (or for Wollstonecraft, education's) ability to create moral progress in the world. It is, in fact, the echo of Pricean dualism in Original Stories that explains how it can be at once the most conservative and the most radical of Wollstonecraft's early works. Indeed, the unique place Original Stories holds in the evolution of Wollstonecraft's thought is by and large a function of Price's influence upon the book. Its belief in moral perfection and in perfectibility, its bitter vision of reality, its rigidity, its lack of introspection, its beliefs, its language, its implicit philosophical and religious justifications for the positions it takes, and its view of the world as a school, God as a teacher, and pain as a pedagogical technique are all attributable to the specific use Original Stories made of Price's moral philosophy.

The similarities between the moral system codified in Price's Review and the one outlined in Original Stories are numerous. They include the emphasis on reason or mind; the belief in absolute rights and wrongs which emanates from a belief in a rational God; the corollary beliefs that God Himself is bound by reason and the rational rules of distributive justice and thus that if not here then hereafter virtue will be rewarded, vice punished; and the certainty that as virtue is strict adherence to one's own reason and conscience, so moral development depends upon one's willingness to inform and perfect one's reason by undertaking a rigorous search for truth and by regarding one's own character with the same objectivity with which one would look upon another's. Taken singly these ideas do not necessarily add up to influence; taken as a whole, and given the ways in which they are employed in the shape and intention of the ideas expressed in Original Stories, they cannot fail to do so.

Wollstonecraft was not, however, content to repeat Price's moral injuctions, and more important than any isolated example of similarity between her work and his, more important than any specific idea of his to which she may have subscribed, is the manner in which she intended to discover, elucidate, and develop the educational recommendations implicit in his Review. Price's major concern was to demonstrate or to prove the logical and necessary connection between mind and morality. In Original Stories Wollstonecraft attempted to show what this meant in terms of pedagogical practice.

Price believed that virtue was a jealous mistress and that "he loves her not at all, who loves her not first".[69] It was hardly an uncommon view, and the fact that Original Stories holds it as its first principle proves nothing in itself. But its debt to Price is clear in its attempt to connect this love of virtue, this insistence that it always retain first place in the character, to the strengthening and developing of the mind and in its attempt to show that without reason--and without independence and liberty--there is, can be, no true morality. It is, in fact, Wollstonecraft's acceptance of Price's view of the structure of the human mind and its relation to morality that is his general influence upon her work.

That Mary Wollstonecraft should have been both attracted and influenced by the ideas of Richard Price is neither surprising nor mysterious. When she met him she was a twenty-four-year-old newly-turned schoolmistress, who had not as yet written anything, but who did possess a long-standing desire to better herself; he, at sixty, was at work on the third edition of A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals, its first two editions, in conjunction with his other publications, having long since established his reputation as one of England's foremost intellects. She was, to put it bluntly, a "nobody", and he, one of the leading men of the age, befriended her. No less than his preeminence, his kindness and gentle-spirited tolerance must have impressed itself upon the young woman who had known so little kindness and who was used to having to fight fiercely for everything she got. It is little wonder that his brand of religion and morality would have had their influence upon her own. But there is more to the fact of Price's influence than biographical explanation, and it is likely that even if they had never met she would have been receptive to his ideas.

Wollstonecraft's pedagogy was, in general, an attempt to reconcile the teachings of Locke with those of Rousseau. In this it was not unusual. But both Locke and Rousseau were philosophers before they were pedagogues, and Wollstonecraft herself, schooled by their works, believed that educational theory had to be grounded in philosophical principles which could account for the development of the human mind and the workings of human nature in general. Thus, Wollstonecraft's debt to Locke and Rousseau is evident not only in the ideas expressed in her work, but in the frameworks in which the ideas are placed and in the prose used to express the ideas. Wollstonecraft's real debt to Locke and Rousseau is, in other words, as much linguistic and philosophical as pedagogical. The reasoned language which resulted from Locke's careful, deductive analysis shaped the empirical bias that dominated

Wollstonecraft's understanding of the workings of the mind and controlled the language she used to explain the mind's internal processes. On the other hand, the impassioned rhetoric that arose out of Rousseau's paradoxical juxtapositions and his intuitionism intensified her belief in the innate powers of the mind and dictated the style in which she expressed her confidence in the mind's powers. In their educational writings both Locke and Rousseau called for reform: Locke's reason explained the need for it; Rousseau's passion pronounced its time had come.

Pedagogically, Wollstonecraft's own work may be said to use the rhetoric of Rousseau to recommend the practice of Locke. In a more general sense, however, the challenge presented to Wollstonecraft by the very real differences between Locke and Rousseau existed as an educational metaphor of the more common oppositions between sense and sensibility, reason and emotion, or rationalism and romanticism. And, more than any other single influence, it was Price--the supreme rationalist with his constant appeals to the meanings of ordinary language and the common man's perceptions of truth and his repeated denunciations of sophistry and intellectual dishonesty--who showed Wollstonecraft how to set about the reconciliation of opposites.

Richard Price's _Review of the Principal Questions in Morals_ is at once as reasoned, as analytical and deductive, as Locke's _Essay Concerning Human Understanding_ and as passionate as Rousseau's _Émile_ or _La Nouvelle Héloïse_. Moreover, the _Review_'s transition from reason to rhetoric is neither artificial nor accidental, but a logical extension of a view of morality which stipulates a natural interdependency between reason and emotion.

The common man, reasons Price, recognizes truth by its own light and is less susceptible to the confusion arising out of semantic debate than many of his educated counterparts. But semantics, sophistry, and doubt for the sake of doubt have managed to cloud relatively simple truths in obscurity, and this Price proposes to set straight. This attempt occupies his attention for the first half to two-thirds of the Review. The truth, he argues, is the truth, and we know it rationally, not emotionally:

> It is true, some impressions of pleasure or pain, satisfaction or disgust, generally attend our perceptions of virtue and vice. But these are merely their effects and concomitants, and not the perceptions themselves, which ought no more to be confounded with them, than a particular truth ... ought to be confounded with the pleasure that may attend the discovery of it. Some emotion or other accompanies, perhaps, all our perceptions; but more remarkably our perceptions of right and wrong. And this ... is what has led to the mistake of making them to signify nothing but impressions, which error some have extended to all objects of knowledge; and thus have been led into an extravagant and monstrous scepticism.[70]

Truth, Price contends, does not change "with the force and liveliness of our feelings",[71] although our personal perceptions of truth may well be affected--and even determined--by the strength of our passions and our passion for truth in particular. And indeed this is the point, for while passages like the above demonstrate Price's determination to establish the objective grounds of his epistemology, the implications in them for emotion and passion have not yet been sufficiently attended to.

Price's concern is not to deny the force of emotion, but only to separate perception from the emotion that accompanies it. Having established its epistemological grounds, the last third of the Review is (in its author's eyes) free from the danger of misleading and can concentrate on the emotions that accompany "our perceptions of right and wrong" and the joys that "attend the discovery" of truth.[72] Consequently, Price's prose makes the corresponding and appropriate shift in emphasis from argumentation to exhortation in the closing sections of his work.

Taken as a whole, the Review is an attempt to demonstrate or to exemplify the workings of a particular process of mind: it begins with self-evident principles, moves to dispassionate analysis of given situations in the light of these principles and the inferences which may be drawn from them, and ideally culminates in moral decisions, which because they are believed to be right are held with passionate conviction. The dominant role in this process belongs, of course, to reason, but Price's "conception of the role of reason in morals" is, according to Bernard Peach, "considerably broader than the view often attributed to rational intuitionists". By this Peach means that not only does Price stress both the intuitive and deductive functions of the mind (and refuse to sacrifice either to the other), but also that in his arguments Price invariably moves from reasoned analysis to "explicit imperatives or exhortations".[73]

It is often thought that

> ... the resort to exhortation signals the end of rational thought, deliberation, or argument and constitutes an outright appeal to emotion, or, in certain cases, to authority. It would seem odd and inconsistent of Price to make such a shift, considering the fundamental role of reason throughout all his writings.[74]

Peach goes on to argue that the shift in Price's prose from analysis to exhortation is, in fact, neither odd nor inconsistent, but simply a function of his epistemological belief that logical conclusions may be drawn from first premises (which are themselves self-evident), that such conclusions are justified or proved by the whole process of reasoning that has preceeded them, and that such logical demonstration is as applicable to moral as to mathematical or physical propositions. In Peach's words,

> Price holds that we can immediately see that a certain imperative is justified in a certain context just as we can see a certain proposition is true or follows necessarily from its premises.[75]

The logical conclusion of reasoning upon a moral proposition is a moral imperative of one kind or another and coming to moral conclusions ("as this is the last thing that can be done in the order of reasoning" before action) may be called "practical reasoning".[76] When practical reasoning leads to a conclusion held with certainty then that conclusion "constitutes an imperative or virtual imperative for action".[77]

What Peach refers to as a "virtual imperative for action" may, somewhat less philosophically but perhaps more descriptively, be called a moral passion. And it is this, whatever we term it, that encapsulates what for Price would have been the natural connection between reason and emotion and the corresponding logical transition in prose from analysis to rhetoric. Such a belief not only allows Price to deny any necessary dichotomy between reason and passion, but in fact to argue that, at least in one sense, passion is the result of reason and reason the justification of passion.

Original Stories bears the mark of Price's influence in its use of language and its development of an argumentative style. "Beauty and wit will die, learning will vanish away, and all the arts of life be soon forgot; but virtue will remain for ever", says Price.[78] It is this kind of "exalted language"[79] that leads D. Daiches Raphael to term Price a "clerical moralist"[80] and moves Bernard Peach to attempt to explain Price's resort to exhortation. And it is the kind of language that Original Stories makes every attempt to imitate:

> When internal goodness is reflected, every other kind of beauty, the shadow of it, withers away before it--as the sun obscures a lamp.[81]

> We are his children when we try to resemble Him, when we are convinced that truth and goodness must constitute the very essence of the soul; and that the pursuit of them will produce happiness, when the vain distinctions of mortals will fade away, and their pompous escutcheons moulder with more vulgar dust![82]

> ... they seemed to come into the world only to crawl half formed,--to suffer, and to die.[83]

Wollstonecraft clearly shares Price's fondness for both clerical rhetoric and the rhetorical opposites that formed the basis of his exhortative style (true versus false; form versus reality; "shadows and tinsel to this first and highest good"; "external elegance versus internal order"; the reputation versus the man; happiness versus folly, disease and misery),[84] a style which she was already familiar with from her reading of Rousseau and one which she uses to full advantage in all her work, although in none so powerfully as the Vindications. This kind of prose was not, of course, unusual to the eighteenth century as a whole; nor (although admittedly it is commonly found here on a more mundane level) to the women's tradition in particular. But if it was common enough for conservative religious moralists to use the language of the church to exhort, it was certainly less than common to employ it in a defense of reason and as the culmination of the process of reason or analysis itself.

Wollstonecraft, moreover, shares Price's passion for words, his insistence that candour is part of veracity and that words are moral things, the use of them a moral issue. Original Stories is a book about reason; the fact that it achieves its force and power less by reasoned analysis than by passionate assertion is directly traceable to Price's belief that reason perceives truth, that perception of truth makes action obligatory, and that that obligation can be expressed in a particular kind of language—the language of exhortation or moral passion.

Even the axiomatic nature of Wollstonecraft's style may, to some degree, be attributed to Price's influence. Like every other women's book of the time, Original Stories is full of wise sayings and clichéd advice. Dorothy Kilner's it is "better to be poor and good, than rich and naughty"[85] is an extreme and simplistic, but nonetheless an illustrative, example of the words of wisdom offered to children by women authors of the age. Wollstonecraft's "anger is a despicable little vice", "it is easy to conquer another but noble to subdue oneself", "a mind is never truly great, till the love of virtue overcomes the fear of death", "wisdom is only another name for virtue", "the foundation of self-respect is honor, the foundation of honor truth" or "respect for the understanding must be the basis of constancy" are drawn from this tradition, although their meaning obviously derives as much from Price's moralism, as from that of female moralists like Kilner, Chapone, Trimmer, and Genlis.[86] Wollstonecraft's use of this kind of language cannot, of course, be solely attributed to Price, who in no sense of the word invented it (although he did himself make use of it upon occasion). He did, however, provide a philosophical justification for the use of it.

"Many principles functioning as final imperatives of action", says Peach explaining Price's view of the matter, "have such well-established justifications that they are self-evident to rational understanding in particular contexts" and "need no explicit accompaniment by their justifying reasons".[87] Price states the matter more simply: "There are", he says, "undoubtedly a variety of moral principles and maxims, which, to gain assent, need only to be understood"; these may be "laid down and used as axioms, the truth of which appears as irresistibly as the truth of those which are the foundation of Geometry".[88] Thus, axioms or clichés can justifiably be seen as forming the basis of common human wisdom or as representing what we know and agree to be true.

Wollstonecraft's attempt to use clichés to represent the immutability and essential truth of moral principles and to encapsulate their force in language is not (as we have seen) without its difficulties. And here Bernard Peach's words are perhaps more instructive than Price's own: "well-established justifications" in Peach's reading of Price are "self-evident to rational understandings _in particular contexts_";[89] out of context, as organizing principles and generalizations, maxims tends to retain their moral force, but lose much of their essential meaning, and this can, in turn, convey an impression of almost inhuman rigidity. Equally true, however, is the fact that axioms that symbolize the essential truths of moral duty or obligation tend to contradict as much as complement one another. Thus, Wollstonecraft's axiomatic demonstration of her moral and pedagogical values contributes to the confusion so evident in _Original Stories_. Her clichés retain genuine moral force as individual statements, and they certainly express views which are indisputably true and for the most part indisputably commonplace. But they do it with a passion and an overall obliviousness to their own contradictions that contributes to the book's dualistic structure, a structure which by contrasting its black vision of injustice, poverty, and cruelty with its very parroting of conventional wisdom implies a bitter criticism of the current state of morals in society.

Price's explication of the relationship between reason and passion and his transposition of that relationship into a particular style of argument laid the basis for his influence upon Wollstonecraft. But if moral passion (often embodied in prose in rhetorical opposites), moral maxims, and moral condemnation of society as it existed can be said to be the major factors in the exhortative style of both the _Review_ and _Original Stories_, it should not be forgotten that, for both authors, these were not only _ways_ of expressing truth, but ways which were symbolic of truth itself, a truth that was absolute and existed independently of perception and feeling.

The aim of Price's _Review_ was "to trace the obligations of virtue up to the truth and the nature of things, and these to the Deity".[90] Speaking of the "reasoning" which informs _Original Stories_, Wollstonecraft says, "it obviously tends to fix principles of truth and humanity on a solid and simple foundation; and to make religion an active, invigorating director of the affections, and not a mere attention to forms".[91] The similarity of aims here is less important than the fact that Price's emphasis on objective truth on the one hand and his emphasis on motives and his anti-determinism on the other helped Wollstonecraft to put her own intentions into practice, for they supported her own belief in psychological self-determinism without denying the force of experience to mould and shape character. Similarly, Price's epistemological and religious beliefs—closer to Wollstonecraft's own Anglican and Latitudinarian background than Rousseau's deism and yet granting more certainty than Locke's strict empiricism—allowed her, like Price himself, to tie virtue to objective truth on the one hand and to the individual mind on the other.

Price's moral views were both detailed and complicated. On one hand, they revealed the objective or absolute nature of right and the passionate regard in which it should be held. On the other, they intensified the nobility of virtue by demonstrating the very real difficulties that complicated its development. Virtue was an attribute of God's mind: it was thus on the abstract level based on the simple and solid foundation Wollstonecraft refers to. On the practical level, however, man was hampered in his pursuit of virtue not only by the weakness of his reason and the limitations of his knowledge, not only by the weakness of his will and the strength of his appetites, but also by the fact that reason itself pointed out conflicting demands. The contradictory nature of man's various duties in real situations and even the contradictory nature of those moral truths which could be embodied in maxims (but certified as universally true only in a general sense not in particular contexts) meant that the most virtuous of men would often discover themselves to be most in the wrong where they had believed themselves to be most right. Moreover, Price's acknowledgement that virtue and law were not one and the same, his realization that political, economic, and social realities often mitigated against virtue meant that the truly virtuous would have to pursue virtue not only without hope of earthly reward, but with the sure knowledge that they were likely to meet with little but disapproval in return. With detailed precision, then, Price presented the need for belief and the grounds for confusion, the necessity for careful painstaking thought which could enlighten the individual conscience but could never completely dispel doubt on a practical level, and he thus provided grounds for belief, passion, and conviction, but not for dogmatic certainty.

Given her own experience, Price's description of the difficulty of virtue would have struck Wollstonecraft more forcibly, seemed more realistic, than either Rousseau's grand passions or Locke's relatively simple moral conflicts between reason and appetite. Moreover, Price's definition of virtue concerned itself less with large conflicts or moral crises of conscience than with the small situations in everyday life whose moral implications could so easily be overlooked. Virtue did not, for Price, consist of bold actions or daring deeds, but careful attention to these small matters. As such, it was a definition clearly applicable to the ways in which most eighteenth-century women lived their lives, and yet one which possessed an importance to which nothing else, in Price's opinion, could lay claim. Original Stories seeks to use this definition of virtue to elevate the position of women. To this effect, it argues that the way to true nobility is not the securing of a wider sphere of action, but a fierce and almost jealous preservation of the narrow sphere of duty already assigned to women. One should accept, wait, do one's duty zealously, and expect reward in heaven:

> Be calm, my child, and remember that you must attend to trifles; do all the good you can the present day, nay hour, if you would keep your conscience clear. This circumspection may not produce dazzling actions, nor will your silent virtue be supported by human applause; but your Father, who seeth in secret, will reward you.[92]

But if Original Stories uses Price's definition of virtue to support aims common to the women's tradition as a whole, it also uses Price to undercut the common view of feminine virtue. In general, Price's moral philosophy had particular advantages for Wollstonecraft, and in her development of a pedagogy, she would ultimately find his beliefs more useful than those of either Locke or Rousseau. This was true for many reasons, and not the least of these was Price's convenient vagueness in certain areas.

The Review clearly establishes the moral grounds on which all decisions must be made. Price's work on the American Revolution would later attempt to prove that as "certain political obligations and imperatives are derived from certain ethical obligations and imperatives" so ethics are "fundamental to politics".[93] The same would obviously hold true of education, but on this topic Price had little to say. He agreed with Locke and Rousseau (and practically everybody else) that common educational practice probably did more harm than good and with everybody except Rousseau that habit formation was the surest way to secure moral character, but beyond this he did not go.[94] The educational imperatives implicit in his moral system thus remained implicit—a fact which could not have failed to attract Wollstonecraft's notice, nor to stimulate her interest, as it left her free to draw her own conclusions without having to worry about reconciling them with the original ones.

Moreover, Price was similarly vague on a second topic which was of crucial interest to Wollstonecraft, and that, of course, was women. Locke had not particularly distinguished between the sexes in outlining his pedagogical recommendations, but he had argued that true virtue (obedience to one's own reason) was probably beyond the reach of most people and implied that love of reputation or conformity to society's demands should be the general aim of education. Rousseau had disagreed, arguing that a man who obeyed anyone's reason but his own was no more than a slave, but he made it all too clear that he was talking about men only, insisting that women were women only insofar as they relied on male reason. Price claimed that there was one kind of virtue, and one only, and that was obedience to one's own reason, and if he did not specifically include women in this definition of virtue, neither did he exclude them. Further, the logical implications of Price's morality were straightforward, simple, and, given belief in his moral system as a whole, irrefutable: either women did not have the capacity of reason and therefore were neither moral nor immoral and could not be held responsible for their actions; or else they, like men, were reasonable creatures and were moral or immoral to the degree they were willing to improve their minds and subject themselves to the commands of their own minds. Wollstonecraft had, of course, already argued as much in _Thoughts_ and in _Mary_, but in _Original Stories_ she uses the argument in conjunction with the educational imperatives implicit in Richard Price's ethical system to further redirect or to modify the women's tradition to suit her own pedagogical purposes.

In its narrative tone or voice, its literary form, and its thematic concerns, _Original Stories_ is a feminine book: it shares the attitudes and beliefs common to the women's tradition as a whole; and, like all women's books, it is religious. But the religion of _Original Stories_ is the religion of Richard Price, and in the _Stories_ the emotional ambivalence characteristic of women writers is contained within an intellectual framework drawn largely from _A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals_. Both the women's tradition and the religious tradition of dissent (which formed Price's background) were eighteenth-century traditions and shared common themes and concerns. The moral zeal, the stress on prudence and on reason, the espousal of a morality or theology based on "Just Deserts"—all found in _Original Stories_—could, in fact, have been shaped by any one of a dozen sources. The ways in which the book displays these qualities and shapes them into literary form, however, reveals a more specific pattern of influence.

Just as _Original Stories_ borrows the ideas and form of Thomas Day's

Sandford and Merton, but remains true in tone to Sarah Trimmer's Fabulous Histories, so it deploys the ideas of Richard Price to interpret, or to redirect, the thematic concerns of the women's tradition in general. But the influence of Price is both more pervasive and significant than that of Day, because it provides not a pedagogy, but a moral philosophy that is in all ways but one perfectly compatible with that supplied in less philosophical terms by women writers. Thus, with one exception, Wollstonecraft is free to use the educational ideas implicit in Price's thought without in any way violating the feminine code.

But Price's insistence that liberty and intelligence are prerequisites of morality and his corollary belief that intellectual and moral improvement cannot be separated are notable exceptions. It not only allows Wollstonecraft to argue that the general aim of female education must be independence, but also to insist that to educate a girl for anything else is to school her for immorality. Rather than being seen as a radical or revolutionary idea, female moral independence can thus be seen as necessary to the upholding of conventional religious values.

Adherence to Price's moral philosophy forces Wollstonecraft to recognize that, if she is to continue to hold the typically feminine belief in the moral superiority of women, she will have to tie moral to a more general superiority of mind. Thus, in Original Stories Wollstonecraft redefines her concept of sensibility so that it has less to do with feeling and more to do with Price's rational intuitionism. Clearly, Mason is to represent a general superiority of mind, and the predisposition to feel things deeply, for example the way the heroine of Mary feels things, is strikingly absent from both Mason's and Trueman's characters. This attempt to redirect the import of sensibility accounts, to some degree, for the lack of introspection in Original Stories, for in it personal feeling (even the author's) has less to do with truth than the rational intuition of moral principles and the process of analysis or deductive reasoning which will help to explain how they should be applied to particular situations.

The general moral principles presented by Mason in Original Stories are similar if not identical to those Price presents in his Review. But, like Price, Wollstonecraft could not fail to notice that the world fell far short of the ideals which we know with certainty to be true and right. For Wollstonecraft, as for Price, if heaven did not exist to rectify the obvious wrongs of society, then human suffering would be pointless and beyond justification; the universe chaotic and without order; and the only appropriate emotional response, despair. Without God, without a belief in an afterlife, there could be no virtue. For both Wollstonecraft and Price the notions of right and justice that were discovered by the mind's innate powers had to come from somewhere. That they were mere illusions based on nothing real was unthinkable. They could not have come from experience, both because they appeared prior to or independently of experience and because the world at large neither taught nor practiced them. Therefore, they must emanate from an order and a reality superior to the human one.

This world, says Wollstonecraft in Original Stories, is "a road to a better--a preparation for it; if we suffer, we grow humbler and wiser". And, that humility and wisdom prepare us for "another world", where we finally meet with justice, "where truth, virtue and happiness dwell together". Heaven, then, literally represents graduation from this world which is essentially a school for virtue, wherein God, the Heavenly Teacher, is "educating us for eternity" and is Himself the "model" held up "to exercise our understanding and engage our affections".[95]

In Original Stories, then, education means moral training, and moral, religious training. The religious education outlined in the Stories presupposes a good, rational, just God,[96] who created the world out of "a disposition to communicate bliss".[97] Thus Original Stories not only condemns the human greed and tyranny which lead to unnecessary suffering, but also emphasizes that in God's eyes all men are created equal and will be judged solely on the basis of their own merit:

> I have often told you that every dispensation of Providence tended to our improvement, if we do not perversely act contrary to our interest. ... there is no real inferiority. ... And do you dare to despise those whom your Creator approves?
>
> Before the greatest earthly beings I should not be awed, they are my fellow servants; and, though superior in rank, which, like personal beauty, only dazzles the vulgar; yet I may possess more knowledge and virtue. The same feeling actuates me when I am in company with the poor; we are creatures of the same nature, and I may be their inferiour in those graces which should adorn my soul, and render me truly great.[98]

Our place in God's eyes is created solely by "the knowledge and virtue" we possess or, as Wollstonecraft phrases it earlier in the book, only "merit, mental acquirements" can give "a just claim to superiority".[99] Knowledge, virtue, and "mental acquirements" bespeak a Pricean God, a God who has made man capable of improvement and decreed that the form that that improvement should take is "imitation" of the truth and justice He Himself represents.[100] To do this, man must seek knowledge--or, in Wollstonecraft's words, "exercise the understanding", "do good", and live "to rational purpose".[101]

The ultimate goal of the education recommended in Original Stories is to get children to take "delight in what is true and noble", to recognize "virtue as the only substantial good", and to learn to "love truth" and "what is right".[102] Wollstonecraft's emphasis on truth, justice, knowledge, and mind (and the ways in which she uses such terms) suggest that, to the degree she holds a consistent epistemological theory, it is that of Price. In her desire to teach children to make moral judgments and to have the courage to act upon them, there can be no doubt of Price's influence, which shapes the very words she uses:

> But remember, my young friends, virtue is immortal; and goodness arises from a quick perception of truth, and actions conformable to the conviction.[103]

Like Price, Wollstonecraft is convinced that moral capacity is a function of mind. Thus, if one is to teach children to make moral judgments or to perceive right and wrong in particular situations, one must train and strengthen their innate abilities of mind: the "improvement of those instruments of the understanding is the object education should have constantly in view, and over which we have the most power", announces Wollstonecraft in her Preface to Original Stories. What exactly she means by improving the understanding, however, remains somewhat vague despite the book's constant references to training, strengthening, improving, cultivating, or exercising the mind.

Her reference to the "quick perception of truth" quoted above and her advice to rely upon the "faithful internal monitor" suggest that, in part, she means one should attune oneself to be aware and to pay attention to the truths known by intuition. But it is also clear that her definition of intellectual training also includes analysis or deduction, by which she means the ability not only to observe closely, but also to generalize or draw conclusions on the basis of observation. Thus, as near as can be determined, a trained mind—or "a good capacity"—is one which can focus on both the internal and external facts of everyday life and subject them to analysis by concentrating on the process of thought itself. Knowledge for Wollstonecraft, as for her century in general, was only secondarily a question of Latin and Greek or what the twentieth century would call academic training. It was first and foremost, as she says in her discussion of Anna Lofty's character, a matter of "acquiring a knowledge of the world and her own heart". And Wollstonecraft is adamant in her insistence that virtue relied on this kind of knowledge, knowledge which could only be achieved by a mind trained to observe both itself and the world around it, capable of generalizing from its observations, and willing and able to subject itself to the conclusions so drawn.[104]

Wollstonecraft may be no more precise than most of her contemporaries (or ours for that matter) on what exactly is meant by training the mind. She is, however, perfectly lucid in her insistence that, whatever it means, it must apply to women's as well as to men's education. A woman, like a man, must be trained or educated to rely on her own mind, to value the "approbation" of her "own heart" above all else, to cultivate in herself a respect for her own understanding and a "just pride and noble ambition", and to depend on her "internal faithful monitor".[105] She must, in other words, be prepared for a state that is independent of everything except truth itself:

> Though she has not any outward decorations, she appears superior to her neighbours, who call her the Gentlewoman; indeed every gesture shews an accomplished and dignified mind, that relies on itself ....[106]
>
> ... children are inferior to servants—who act from the dictates of reason, and whose understandings are arrived at some degree of maturity, while children must be governed and directed, till their's gains strength to work by itself: for it is the proper exercise of our reason that makes us in any degree independent.[107]

> When life advances, if the heart has been capable of receiving early impressions, and the head of reasoning and retaining the conclusions which were drawn from them; we have acquired a stock of knowledge, a gold mine which we can occasionally recur to, independent of outward circumstances. ... But be assured our chief comfort must ever arise from the mind's reviewing its own operations--and the whispers of an approving conscience, to convince us that life has not slipped away unemployed.[108]

The pedagogy recommended in Original Stories is designed to teach girls how to use their minds to enable them to be independent and thus truly moral. In its aim, its rigor, and its zeal, it is influenced by the moral philosophy outlined in Price's Review. Virtue, in Price's opinion, is the careful deliberation before every action as to "what, all things considered, reason and right require of you"; it is keeping "reason vigilant and immoveable at the helm"; it is the constant conformity of actions to one's own opinion of right, to the point where "the practical principle of rectitude" is able "to absorb every other principle, and annihilate every contrary tendency".[109] And it is, says Price, a difficult undertaking:

> Such is the present condition of man; so great is the disorder vice and folly have introduced into our frame; and so many are the surprizes to which we are liable; that to preserve in any degree the integrity of our characters and peace within ourselves, is difficult. But, to find out and correct the various disorders of our minds; to preserve an unspotted purity of life and manners; to destroy all seeds of envy, pride, ill-will, and impatience; to listen to nothing but reason in the midst of the clamour of the passions, and continue always faithful to our duty, however courted by the world, allured by pleasure, or deterred by fear; to cultivate all good dispositions, guard against all snares, and clear our breasts of all defilements.--What an arduous work is this?--What unwearied diligence does it call for?--And how much of it, after our utmost care and labour, must remain undone?[110]

This is the virtue that Original Stories attempts to show Mason teaching to Caroline and Mary by her own example. It shares the zeal and the strict attention to detail with the women's tradition, but its insistence that virtue must ultimately be the product of one's own struggle, the result of one's own reason, and can never be merely obedience to authority or convention is less usual.

In this sense the goal of the education presented in Original Stories is, in fact, quite simply to foster moral awareness: from there the individual must carry on alone. When Caroline announces that before Mason's presence she "never wished to be good--nobody told me what it was to be good",[111] she is paying the highest compliment possible to Mason's pedagogical powers. Women teachers--in women's books--were invariably capable of inspiring high aspirations to virtue, but both the general aim of the education presented in Original Stories (the ability to think) and its methodology (the means by which thinking could be taught) are the result of applying the educational implications of Price's Review to the standard practices recommended in women's educational tracts.

Original Stories proposes to train children for virtue, and its definition of virtue is drawn from Price's considerations upon the matter. In this sense, Original Stories is a simplified version of the ethical system outlined in the Review, and like the Review, it denies that virtue can be reduced to the application of one principle. Our duties are various. They include to "avoid hurting any thing" and "to give as much pleasure" as we can (or benevolence); the "duty of prayer" or imitating God and preparing ourselves "to be angels hereafter" (duty to God); recognizing that "Honour consists in respecting [ourselves]" (prudence) and that "the foundation of honour is Truth" or that truth is "indeed the essence of devotion, the employment of the understanding, and the support of every duty" (veracity); gratitude, first to God from whom we receive "life and all its blessings" and second to others from whom we have received kindness and favour; and "scrupulous attention" to what is right or learning to act "conformably to the rules of justice", for "the foundation of all virtue", says Wollstonecraft, "is justice".[112] Virtue is the pursuit of all these various duties, and Wollstonecraft, like Price, is adamant in her insistence that the neglect of even one is the death of true virtue. A benevolent man, however compassionate and humane, who lacks "devotional feelings" lacks "true dignity" and true morality.[113] Equally true is that without benevolence, or the active search for ways to make others happy, a man, no matter how devoted to God or to justice or to truth, cannot be truly virtuous: "that devotion is mockery and selfishness", says Wollstonecraft, "which does not improve our moral character".[114] A moral character not only esteems, but does good; to avoid wrong is, of course, necessary, but for both Wollstonecraft and Price it is not alone enough; one must as well actively seek good, for passive virtue (the avoidance of actual wrongdoing) is not virtue, but merely prudence.

These similarities between Original Stories and the Review, however, constitute a philosophical or religious agreement, not an educational one. Indeed, the fashioning of pedagogical principles to complement Price's ethical system can be neither a matter of simple agreement nor straightforward influence. In the first place, far from being an educationist himself, Price seems to take a rather jaundiced view of the whole field of education. And in the second, within the context of his work, moral training is, strictly-speaking, a contradiction in terms.

Man does not have to be trained for virtue, because virtue, in Price's opinion, is man's natural state:

> It deserves particular regard, that the natural state of a being is always his sound, and good, and happy state; that all the corruptions and disorders we observe are plainly unnatural deviations and excesses; and no instance can be produced wherein ill as such is the genuine tendency and result of the original constitution of things.[115]

> The sensible horror at vice, and attachment to virtue ... the grand lines and primary principles of morality are so deeply wrought into our hearts, and one with our minds, that they will be for ever legible.[116]

Continuing to sound like an echo of Rousseau, Price goes on to say that nature can, however, be perverted, man's moral instincts dulled, his "sense of shame weakened",[117] and his intellectual perceptions of right and wrong blurred although not destroyed. Price assigns the blame for this corruption not to flaws in man's original constitution, but to custom and education: "All that custom and education can do, is to alter the direction of natural sentiments and ideas, and to connect them with wrong objects".[118]

That Original Stories shows Mason converting her charges to virtue with relative ease and that it pronounces happiness to be dependent upon innocence suggest that Wollstonecraft herself believed that, if virtue was not the natural state, it was certainly a natural, and naturally predominant, tendency.[119] On the other hand, while she needed nothing beyond her own experience to convince her that education frequently did more harm than good, she did not believe (and refused to believe) that all education could do was essentially harmful. The understanding could be either enslaved or liberated by education. If education did not provide the tools by which the mind could free itself, then it would most certainly enslave; but if it taught a child to think, then eventually the child would be able to use her own mind to reverse the negative associations of her education and experience and thus reapproach the natural state in the clearness of her perceptions. This is, once again, Wollstonecraft's emphasis on a kind of education whose ultimate goal is to teach the skills which will allow the individual to re-educate herself, and Price's ethics provide Wollstonecraft with yet another justification for it. Price claims that considering into

> what mazes of error, superstition and destructive conduct, a misguided judgment may lead us; we cannot be too diligent in labouring rightly to inform our consciences; or too anxious about obtaining just apprehensions, and freeing ourselves from the power of whatever prejudices or passions tend to warp our minds, and are inconsistent with that coolness, candour, and impartiality which are indispensably necessary qualifications in one who would discover what is true and right.[120]

The difference between Price and Wollstonecraft's advice on this topic is merely a question of semantics: he does not term the process of training or freeing the mind from "whatever prejudices or passions tend to warp"[121] it education, while she most explicitly does.

If virtue is a state of mind, then safeguarding the natural development of the mind will ensure the development of virtue. In other words, to teach a child to think one had only to clear the path for thinking, to prevent passion or prejudice from corrupting the mind's processes and to provide the understanding with the experience from which (by the strength of its own innate powers) it would draw moral conclusions. Again, this sounds very much like Rousseau. But Price's argument, unlike Rousseau's, was based less on a natural state of virtue than on the mind's natural perception and esteeming of virtue, and Rousseau and Price's arguments, despite superficial similarities, are not one and the same.

The educational imperatives implicit in Price's view differ from

Rousseau's in two basic ways. First, Price does not believe the natural state to be a free one--the perception of right and wrong *obligates* an individual of *any age* to act according to his own view of right, and a state of moral obligation cannot be a free state. Thus, treating a child as if he were free, even within certain limitations, or leaving him to come to moral decisions by virtue of their pragmatic consequences is to teach utility not morality and is likely to corrupt the child as thoroughly as more conventional forms of childrearing. Second, Rousseau believed that as first impulses were self-evidently natural so they were correct; Price did not. "It is that part of our moral constitution which depends on instinct, that is chiefly liable ... to corruption",[122] says Price, and if instinct is not early and habitually brought under the dominion of reason, then it will surely lead the character astray. The state of virtue was natural to man: this, for Price, was an absolute truth, and on an abstract or theoretical level, it functioned absolutely. But practically-speaking, this did not mean that leaving the child alone or merely preventing his acquiring bad habits or false ideas would ensure the development of morality. Virtue relied upon reason and until the child's reason gained strength, the authority of habit and not reliance upon the instinctive part of nature was the best safeguard of virtue.

Securing reason's control over passion, appetite, or instinct, then, called for more than simple reliance upon Nature. The instincts, which gain sway long before the understanding in the natural scheme of things, had been originally designed to promote virtue and to protect the individual during the long time his reason took to mature. But instincts were easily corrupted, and if ever allowed to rule would be reluctant to be overthrown when reason came of age. Reason's function was to redress the natural order of the passions or instincts, not by eradicating them, but by adjusting one to the other until they co-existed and worked together as a harmonious whole to promote the development of the moral character, but this work had to be begun before the ascent of reason or reason would never be able to assume its proper place in the order of things. "It is a common observation", says Price, "that it is the ruling passion that denominates the character".[123] When reason is able to gain control over the mind, then love of virtue becomes the ruling passion; when any passion other than the moral one predominates, then the individual's thinking will not be clear and his character will not be virtuous. He loves virtue "not at all, who loves her not first", says Price.[124] Only virtue, says Wollstonecraft, "calms the passions, gives clearness to the understanding, and opens it to pleasures that the thoughtless and vicious have not a glimpse of".[125]

Following along these lines, the aim of Original Stories is to strengthen the moral passion, to establish its preminence, in the characters of Mary and Caroline. If the girls had been in Mason's charge all along, this could have been accomplished by preserving their natural predisposition to morality by the early introduction and reinforcement of good habits. But Mary and Caroline represent what is to Wollstonecraft's mind a more common state of affairs: Mary at fourteen and Caroline at twelve have already been corrupted by prejudice and their characters allowed to wander along wayward paths. Mary's ruling passion is not rectitude but "her turn for ridicule",[126] while vanity and greed rule her sister Caroline's mind.

Once the moral passion has been displaced, only reason can restore it to its rightful place. Mason's constant supervision of the girls (which would not have been necessary if they had been properly educated in the first place)[127] and her constant reasoning are clearly designed to serve this purpose: they allow Mason to discover and to point out the differences between right and wrong to which the girls have grown immune and allow her to provide a continual running commentary which is to function as an example of the reasoning process itself, so the girls will have an idea of what thinking is and a model to imitate. Thus, at least in Wollstonecraft's own eyes, her dictum that she intends to impart knowledge more by "example than teaching" is justified.[128]

"What we most love, is that which we oftenest think of",[129] says Price, and this, carried a step further by Wollstonecraft to "what oftenest occupies the thoughts will influence our actions",[130] is the basis of Mason's pedagogy. What Mason intends to do is to get the girls to love and value virtue above all else; how she intends to do it is simply by getting them to think about virtue, trusting to the natural powers of their minds to draw the appropriate conclusions once they have been set in the right track. Mason, in fact, intends to teach what she calls "a mode of thinking", because, in her opinion, the simplest means by which to promote moral conduct is to demonstrate a moral "mode of thinking, and the conduct produced by it".[131] The pedagogical implications of such statements are clear: thought determines action and actions reveal states of mind; thus, if we observe what children do, we will know of what they think; having thus determined their ruling passion, we can begin to turn that passion to the moral ends it was originally designed to serve by bringing it under the control of reason. But this, Wollstonecraft warns, is possible only when authority itself is both reasonable and moral: anything less inevitably leads not to moral education, but to moral corruption.

The result of moral education is a balanced personality, and what both Price and Wollstonecraft mean by this is a personality in which the "understanding" takes "the lead"[132] and adjusts or balances the relative weight of the passions and appetites to each other so that the individual can function as a harmonious and happy whole. This kind of education is largely a question of diagnosis based on close observation and ultimately must become self-education based on painstakingly honest self-analysis. Mason's supervision of Mary and Caroline, her stories, the people she introduces them to, and the experiences she arranges for them to have are designed, first, to enable Mason to diagnose the girls' moral problems and, second, to make the girls themselves aware of their own deficiencies so they may use reason to correct them. The methods Mason uses are drawn from many sources (Locke, Rousseau, Trimmer, Day, Chapone, and the women's tradition in general), but the organizing and justifying of the pedagogical principles demonstrated in Original Stories are dominated by the supremacy of the moral principle and by a specifically Pricean definition of morality and its necessary relation to mind.

More than either of Wollstonecraft's two earlier books, Original Stories takes the position that virtue is the result of conscious effort and continual striving for improvement. While echoing Price's claim that virtue is natural to man, Original Stories recognizes (as does Price's Review) that man's natural inclination to virtue is by no means sufficient to protect him from corruption and, in fact, approaches or implies the position Wollstonecraft would take two years later on the question of what exactly was "natural" to man and what was not:

> But should experience prove that there is a beauty in virtue, a charm in order, which necessarily implies exertion, a depraved sensual taste may give way to a more manly one—and melting feelings to rational satisfactions. Both may be equally natural to

> man; the test is their moral difference, and that point reason alone can decide.[133]

Original Stories: Cautious Rebellion

Despite the influence of Price, Original Stories is, finally, a woman's book. It recommends women develop their minds and insists that independence or reliance upon one's own reason is a precondition of morality in either men or women. But, ultimately, its main goal, like that of other women's books of the period, is to elevate the position of women by ensuring if not proving the moral superiority of the female sex as a whole. It is, nonetheless, a different kind of woman's book, and it is particularly different from either of Wollstonecraft's two previous books. Thoughts on the Education of Daughters and Mary, A Fiction had typically examined problems in women's education and in women's lives from their author's personal point of view. Original Stories is rigidly impersonal, and, indeed, it is as much its certainty, its lack of doubt, as its lack of introspection, that sets it apart from either of the two earlier works.

D. Daiches Raphael claims that Price is weak on "introspective psychology", but "has his eyes wide open, where others are blind, in observational psychology".[134] From a reading of Thoughts and Mary, one could well come to exactly the opposite conclusion about Wollstonecraft and thus would expect that the use she would make of Price's ideas would be considerably different from his own. This, indeed, was true of the use she made of Price's moral philosophy in both Thoughts and Mary. It is also true in Original Stories, but here instead of introducing doubts as to the mind's own ability to really know itself or espousing the claims of passion against heartless duty, she does not even merely follow but intensifies the already stringent demand for zeal found in Price and in fact simplifies or dismisses the notes of doubt he himself introduces.

Price's definition of practical morality, for example, presupposes that the individual is capable of knowing his own motives with a reasonable degree of certainty; it assumes, in other words, that an individual can usually tell the difference between what he _wants_ to do or _feels_ like doing and what he rationally _believes_ to be the right thing to do, the thing he _ought_ to do. Wollstonecraft had doubted this basic tenet of Pricean morals in both of her earlier books; in _Original Stories_ she not only seems to accept it, but to accept it with fewer reservations than Price himself displayed on the topic. Similarly, Price's belief that virtue is not always rewarded, nor vice always punished, in this world seems to present peculiar problems to Wollstonecraft in _Original Stories_. On one hand, she cannot deny it, and her own dark view of reality supports it totally, makes it even darker than had Price's _Review_. On the other, if she can accept that _tangible_ rewards and punishments do not follow immediately from virtue and vice, she cannot and will not accept the reality of a villain who does not feel guilt or moral discomfort or an innocent who does. In this respect, she not only departs from her earlier views on the matter (and particularly from those expressed in her personal letters where she consistently argues that moral and intellectual improvement more often lead to pain than pleasure),[135] but also from Price's own. The same is true of the use Wollstonecraft makes of Price's six heads of virtue or branches of duty. She does deny that virtue can be reduced to the application of one principle, but while meticulously supplying examples of the six various duties man must seek to fulfill, she conveniently overlooks

Price's insistence that the six can contradict as well as complement one another and instead presents the path of duty as clearcut and straightforward.

These departures from her earlier work and from Price himself are significant, and it is clear that in Original Stories Wollstonecraft intends to abandon introspection and doubt for a more rigorous, and rigid, kind of certainty. Original Stories's intensification of Price's already stringent demand for moral zeal and its simplification of his moral issues was, of course, strictly in accord with the women's tradition in general and the current trend in children's literature in particular. But Original Stories uses both Price's zeal and the ideas out of which it arose, as the traditions in neither women's nor children's literature could be used, to fashion a religious justification for female independence. Original Stories is the most conventional of Mary Wollstonecraft's early works, precisely because as the anger so forcibly revealed in the Stories increased, she came more and more to realize the dangerous unconventionality of arguing that what was true of men was equally true of women. To make this line of reasoning more acceptable to the public at large, she makes it clear that educating women for independence would intensify rather than weaken the demands of conventional morality, would uphold and strengthen rather than undermine established law and order. Original Stories uses Price's ideas to shape its own thematic concerns and, simultaneously, his stress on prudence to restrain them.

Thoughts on the Education of Daughters recommended realistic accommodation; Mary, A Fiction, until its last chapter, espoused romantic rebellion; Original Stories, in a certain sense, does both. It proposes religion, reason, resignation, and duty, but it clearly disapproves of a world where so little happiness, so little justice, so little morality, is to be found. Price's religious and philosophical views are used to organize and to justify this dissatisfaction, and, while Original Stories's religious impulses are obviously sincere, they just as obviously function to restrain Wollstonecraft's rebellious impulses. So, too, the belief in a God who uses heaven to redress the wrongs of earth functions to make political, social, or economic reform less of an immediate necessity.

Nonetheless, from criticism of an aristocracy which abuses its privileges and ignores its responsibilities to criticism of a political order that grants extensively unequal and unjust privileges in the first place is a logical, if not necessarily a natural, evolution of thought. Wollstonecraft would not attempt this leap for another two years, when with some trepidation she would publish her Vindication of the Rights of Men, at least partly in response to the attack made on Price in Edmund Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution. And it would be yet another two years before she would spell out the social, economic, and political implications of recommending women rely solely upon their own minds. But Original Stories prepares the ground for such a leap in its forging of a moral philosophy and in its insistence (like Price's own) that all decisions were at base moral ones.

Original Stories is, in short, the work of a rebel--a very cautious rebel, whose very urge to rebel seems to be compensated for by a contrary tendency to conservatism and even rigidity. It alternates between placid acceptance and caustic criticism of conventional moral values, and it remains an ambivalent and transitional book. Despite its ambivalence and inability to commit itself to either rebellious rage or resigned acceptance, and perhaps because of this very ambivalence, Original Stories is curiously compelling. Its application of Price's "fundamental humanism"[136] and his belief in "the inherent right to freedom of enquiry"[137] to attitudes characteristic of the women's tradition makes it fascinating in its own right. But it is also the beginning of a process of reevaluation and reinterpretation that would culminate some four years later in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

NOTES

[1] Trueman's husband is perhaps an exception, but even he is used merely as a foil to demonstrate his wife's domestic virtues; he is never seen in his own right and is barely characterized at all.

[2] See M.W., the "History of Charles Townley", Or. St., pp. 40-47.

[3] M.W., Or. St., p. 70.

[4] M.W., Or. St., p. 73.

[5] See M.W., Or. St., p. 50.

[6] M.W., Or. St., p. 45.

[7] "To Joseph Johnson", [late 1787/early 1788], Letter 69, C.L. of M.W., p. 167; see Chapter IV, p. 175, of this study for full quotation.

[8] The influence of Richard Price on the form and content of Mary, A Fiction was not extensively dealt with in Chapter IV of this study. That was not because it did not exist, but because it did not work and was overwhelmed by the influence of Rousseau which dominated and overpowered the influence of Price in the novel. This is not true of Or. St., where there is much less of the rationalized theism or mystically-vitalized deism of Rousseau, less of the Rousseauan love of paradox, and more of the precise and philosophically-based morality of Price.

[9] Both phrases used by his biographers, as quoted in Bernard Peach, Introduction, Richard Price and the Ethical Foundations of the American Revolution (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1979), p. 14.

[10] Peach, p. 9.

[11] Lincoln, English Dissent, pp. 114 and 145, as quoted in Eleanor Nicholes, "Mary Wollstonecraft" in Shelley and his Circle, 1773-1822, Volume I, ed. Kenneth Neill Cameron (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 57.

[12] Richard Price, Introduction to his A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals (1758), rpt. of the 3rd ed. (1787) ed. and introd. D. Daiches Raphael (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 11; hereafter cited as Price, Review.

[13] See Peach, pp. 13f, and D. Daiches Raphael, Editor's Introduction to A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals, by Richard Price, 3rd ed. (1787; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), pp. x, xiii, xv, and xvi. Price refers to Locke several times in his Review, calls him a "great man" (p. 43), and in general makes clear his admiration for Locke's Essay, while deploring Locke's lack of clarity in delineating his epistemological definition of the source of our ideas (See Review, pp. 17-18).

[14] Raphael, p. xii.

[15] Price, Preface to the First Edition, Review, 1758 (not included by Price in the Third Edition, but included by Raphael in the 1948 reprint of the Third Edition), p. 4.

[16] Quotations in the sentence are from Price, Review, pp. 15 and 47.

[17] David Hume, Treatise of Human Nature and Philosophical Essays, as quoted in Price, Review, p. 42.

[18] Price, Review, p. 43.

[19] Price, Review, p. 27.

[20] Price, Review, p. 85.

[21] Raphael, p. xii.

[22] Quotations in the paragraph are from Price, Review, pp. 19, 35, and 36 (his emphasis throughout); for Price's opinion regarding innate ideas, see the Review, pp. 30-31; it should be noted that Price's insistence that the understanding was "the most important source of our ideas" (p. 36) is in direct contradiction of Locke's claim that all simple ideas derived from sense, for Price is not only arguing that the understanding can be a source of ideas, but also that it is the most important source of new simple ideas.

[23] Price, Review, p. 265 (his emphasis).

[24] Price, Review, p. 265.

[25] Price, Review, p. 97.

[26] Raphael, p. x.

[27] Quotations in the sentence are from Jonathan Milner Bordo,

"The Appeal to Reason: The Legitimacy of Science and the Cartesian Genealogy of Knowledge", Diss. Yale 1980, pp. 26 and 25.

[28] Quotations in the sentence are from Price, Review, pp. 127 and 98 (his emphasis).

[29] Price, Review, pp. 97-98.

[30] Raphael, p. xiv.

[31] Descartes, as quoted in Bordo, p. 19.

[32] Bordo, p. 19.

[33] Quotations in the sentence are from Raphael, p. xiv.

[34] Quotations in the sentence are from Price, Review, pp. 50, 85, and 47.

[35] Price, Review, p. 244.

[36] Price, Review, p. 249.

[37] M.W., Thoughts, p. 132.

[38] Price, Review, p. 89 (his emphasis).

[39] Necessary as opposed to contingent; hereafter the underlining of the word "necessary" in the text will signify that it is being used in the strict philosophical meaning of the word (used by Price to mean in the true nature of things) as opposed to either (1) a contingent or entailed characteristic that could perhaps have been otherwise or (2) the somewhat looser meaning of the word in everyday speech.

[40] To say that God made the love of right, the abhorrence of evil, and the ability to discern between good and evil part of man's mind is no more (for Price) than to say that God made a rational rather than an irrational creature in man, which in turn is the same as saying God created man in His own image.

[41] "Our thoughts are here lost in an unfathomable abyss where we find room for everlasting progress" (Review, p. 87); Price's belief in perfectibility will be discussed later in this chapter.

[42] Price, Review, p. 153.

[43] See Price, Review, pp. 79-80; Price argues that if there were only two men in the world (and thus public utility could no longer be an issue) and further that if one of these men was virtuous and the other vicious, we "should still approve of a different treatment of them" because "we have an immediate approbation of making the virtuous happy and discouraging the vicious, abstracted from all consequences" (Review, p. 80). We have, in other words, an innate regard for virtue (hence our desire to see our own actions as right and our overwhelming need to justify our own misdeeds by moral rationalization--desires which according to Price do not have to be taught or conditioned into us) and the subsequent desire (when our instincts have not been corrupted) to see virtue rewarded and vice punished regardless of the consequences this might have on society as a whole.

[44] Price, Review, p. 137.

[45] Price, Review, pp. 137-38 (his emphasis).

[46] Quotation in the sentence is from Price, Review, p. 151; Price outlines and explains what he holds each of these six heads of virtue to mean on pp. 138-164 of his Review.

[47] Price, Review, p. 138.

[48] Price, Review, p. 165.

[49] Price, Review, p. 165 (his emphasis).

[50] Price believes, as stated previously, the concept of right to be self-evident to the rational mind. He does admit intuition is found "in various degrees ... sometimes clear and perfect, and sometimes faint and obscure" (Review, p. 99), but he holds that the ideas of right and wrong arrived at by intuition can be known with absolute certainty. For example, to ask why man should be grateful to God is for Price to ask why 20 is greater than 2 (see Review, p. 139). Likewise we know justice, benevolence, gratitude, self-love, and veracity are moral principles, and we know it without doubt. These principles in fact (claims Price) receive universal assent because they are universal truths. It may be argued that if but one man were to deny this, on his own behalf, Price's position would be undermined. Price, however, would only reply that such an assertion were dishonest--that no man really holds, for example, that lying, lust, or greed are in principle good. Here Price is quick to note that even the worst criminals are prone to justify their actions by recourse to circumstances or other practical considerations which in their own opinions mitigate against their guilt; the same criminals, in objecting to the immoral behavior of others, reassert their innate belief and give consent to the idea that some things are known to be better than others. And all "beings", asserts Price, "who have any idea of moral good, must have an affection to it" (Review, p. 213); whether they live up to it or not is another matter entirely.

[51] Price, Review, p. 166.

[52] Quotations in the paragraph are from Price, Review, pp. 167-168.

[53] Price, Review, p. 180.

[54] Price, Review, p. 178 (his emphasis).

[55] Price, Review, p. 177.

[56] Price, Review, p. 177 (his emphasis).

[57] Quotations in the sentence are from Price, Review, p. 184 and elsewhere throughout the book and used frequently in Chapter VIII in particular.

[58] Ultimately, of course, only God can judge the virtue of either the agent or the action; absolute moral judgment, like the absolute knowledge it presupposes and the absolute virtue it denotes, are solely His prerogative.

[59] Quotations in the paragraph are from Price, Review, pp. 179-183 and the notes on pp. 179-183 (his emphasis throughout).

[60] Quotations in the paragraph are from Price, Review, p. 184 (his emphasis throughout).

[61] Quotations in the paragraph are from Price, Review, pp. 221 and 165.

[62] Quotations in the paragraph are from Price, Review, pp. 198 and 154-55 (his emphasis).

[63] Quotations in the paragraph are from Price, Review, pp. 231, 231, 224, and 231 respectively (his emphasis throughout).

[64] Price, Review, p. 179 (his emphasis).

[65] Quotations in the paragraph are from Price, Review, pp. 225 and 256.

[66] Price, Review, p. 257 (his emphasis).

[67] Price, Review, pp. 260-61 (his emphasis).

[68] Quotations in the sentence are from Price, Review, p. 261.

[69] Price, Review, p. 221 (his emphasis).

[70] Price, Review, p. 44.

[71] Price, Review, p. 47.

[72] Quotations in the sentence are from Price, Review, p. 47.

[73] Quotations in the paragraph are from Peach, pp. 20 and 30.

[74] Peach, p. 30.

[75] Peach, p. 32.

[76] Quotations in the sentence are from Peach, p. 32.

[77] Peach, p. 38.

[78] Price, Review, p. 266.

[79] Raphael, p. xi.

[80] Raphael, p. xi.

[81] M.W., Or. St., p. 28.

[82] M.W., Or. St., p. 71.

[83] M.W., Or. St., p. 85.

[84] See Price, Review, pp. 230, 231, 267 and 275.

[85] Kilner, The Village School, I, 26.

[86] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., pp. 15, 5, 34, 52, 19 and 50 respectively.

[87] Peach, p. 38.

[88] Price, Review, pp. 168-69.

[89] Peach, p. 38 (my emphasis).

[90] Price, Introduction to his Review, p. 11.

[91] M.W., Preface to her Or. St., pp. viii-xix.

[92] M.W., Or. St., p. 46-47.

[93] Peach, p. 35.

[94] See Price, Review, pp. 172-73, 204, 210, and 219-25.

[95] Quotations in the paragraph are from M.W., Or. St., pp. 8, 24, 77 and 62 respectively.

[96] M.W., Or. St., p. 2.

[97] Price, Review, p. 249; cf M.W., Or. St., p. 2.

[98] M.W., Or. St., pp. 51-52.

[99] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., pp. 52 and 33 respectively.

[100] Imitation of God's virtue, wisdom, and goodness is one of Or. St.'s most frequent recommendations; see pp. 3, 5, 8, 25, 55 and 61 for examples.

[101] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., pp. 62 and 46; exercising the understanding is another term which Wollstonecraft (like Price) uses frequently--see pp. 28, 30, 39, 40, 48-51, 65, 72, and 87 for examples.

[102] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., pp. 75-87.

[103] M.W., Or. St., p. 71.

[104] Quotations in the paragraph are from M.W., Or. St., pp. xviii, 71, 62, 72 and 67 respectively.

[105] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., pp. 76, 79, and 62 respectively.

[106] M.W., Or. St., p. 23 (her emphasis).

[107] M.W., Or. St., p. 51 (her emphasis).

[108] M.W., Or. St., p. 55.

[109] Quotations in the sentence are from Price, Review, pp. 219, 228, and 225 respectively.

[110] Price, Review, pp. 226-27.

[111] M.W., Or. St., p. 27.

[112] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., pp. 5, 87, 7, 19, 20, 19, 19, 19, 86 and 84 respectively (her emphasis).

[113] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., p. 64; see the "History of Mr. Lofty" (pp. 64-67) for an example of a character who is compassionate and humane, but not virtuous because of his lack of "devotional feelings" which impart true stability to the moral character.

[114] M.W., Or. St., p. 63 (her emphasis).

[115] Price, Review, p. 241 (his emphasis).

[116] Price, Review, p. 173 (his emphasis).

[117] Price, Review, p. 173.

[118] Price, Review, p. 173.

[119] "Nothing, believe me, can long be pleasant that is not innocent" (M.W., Or. St., p. 21).

[120] Price, Review, p. 198 (his emphasis).

[121] Price, Review, p. 198.

[122] Price, Review, p. 173.

[123] Price, Review, p. 219 (his emphasis).

[124] Price, Review, p. 221 (his emphasis).

[125] M.W., Or. St., p. 63 (my emphasis).

[126] M.W., Introduction to Or. St., n. page.

[127] See M.W., Introduction to Or. St., n. page.

[128] M.W., Preface to Or. St., p. xviii.

[129] Price, Review, p. 219.

[130] M.W., Or. St., p. 63.

[131] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Or. St., p. 15 (my emphasis).

[132] M.W., Or. St., p. 40.

[133] M.W., A Vindication of the Rights of Men in A Wollstonecraft Anthology, ed. and introd. Janet M. Todd (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 78 (her emphasis); hereafter cited as M.W., V.R.M.

[134] Raphael, p. xxvii.

[135] See in particular "Letter to the Reverend Henry Dyson Gabell", April 16 [1787], Letter 58, C.L. of M.W., pp. 149-50.

[136] Peach, p. 39.

[137] Nicholes, p. 56.

CHAPTER VI

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

Vindication (1790-1792)

> My own sex, I hope, will excuse me if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their *fascinating* graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone.
>
> --Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

The reviewing, translating, studying, the almost unremitting work of 1787 to 1790, prepared Wollstonecraft to meet the demands of a competitive marketplace by strengthening her powers of expression, sharpening her critical skills, and reaffirming her belief in her own mind. But hard work and self-imposed discipline led not only to personal and intellectual, but also to financial, social, and professional rewards. Despite a steadily increasing income, Wollstonecraft continued to live sparingly in order to clear past debts and to contribute to the support of family and friends, but guaranteed regular employment of a sort she enjoyed was, nonetheless, a treasure to be cherished.

By late 1789 or early 1790, Wollstonecraft could congratulate herself on having achieved not only the independence, but also the intellectual companionship of which she had always dreamed, for she had, by this time, established herself as a force to be reckoned with in the circle of intellectuals, liberals, and radicals who met regularly at Johnson's to dine and to discuss painting, literature, music, mathematics, history, and, most of all, the politics of social reform. Johnson's circle included some of the foremost minds of the age, and it was no small feat to have educated herself to the point where her mind could command the respect of men like Joseph Priestley, William Blake, and Henri Fuseli.

Professionally, Wollstonecraft could take pride in the increasing importance of the work she was assigned to review for The Analytical. In 1788 the bulk of her reviews had appeared under the sections entitled Novels, Romance, Education, and Travel. By 1789 she was contributing as well to the theology, biography, music, architecture, poetry, and theatre sections, and by 1790 she was regularly reviewing difficult and important books. By the fall of 1790 the apprenticeship was over, and Wollstonecraft undertook the lead review for the November issue of The Analytical. The work under consideration was Catharine Macaulay Graham's Letters on Education: with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects.

Long before the appearance of Letters on Education it had been acknowledged that Catharine Macaulay was no ordinary woman: she wrote history, politics, and philosophy; her History of England under the Stuarts was "highly regarded",[1] and its author seen as a rare exception --a woman with an indisputably first-rate mind, a prodigy. Wollstonecraft's review of Macaulay's Letters demonstrates some of the changes that had occurred in her own thinking since her arrival in London. There is in the review a direct demonstration of her own familiarity with topics that her century believed to be accessible only to men or to those few women with "masculine" minds: the nature of God; the relation of reason to happiness; the distinctions between true and false reasoning, or moral integrity and sophistry; and the differences between the philosophical belief in free will and the belief in the compulsion of motives or necessitarianism. She also reveals her own increasingly rational religious beliefs, her continuing debt to Richard Price, and her new liberal creed. She denies the existence of hell, affirms the existence of a future state for those who have undeservedly suffered, and argues that religious belief does not depend on revelation. Harkening back to her theme in Original Stories, she remarks that "could the rich be induced to employ themselves in softening the distresses of the poor, what good effects would result to both!", only to agree with Macaulay that the rich are not likely to undertake such a course voluntarily.[2]

While Wollstonecraft reports and approves, she does not emphasize what must have been the truly shocking and revolutionary content of Letters on Education: Macaulay's assertion that there was "no characteristic difference in sex" and that, therefore, the "false" notions of "beauty and delicacy" which corrupt feminine bodies, minds, and morals must be replaced by an education in independence and women educated like men.[3] All in all, Wollstonecraft's review is uncharacteristically restrained for a woman who was always outspoken and who, in less than a month, would herself be writing revolutionary polemics and, in a little over a year, would return to Macaulay's themes and immortalize them in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Wollstonecraft concluded her review as quietly as she had begun it, by recommending Macaulay's book without reservation and commending its "sound reason and profound thought which either through defective organs, or a mistaken education" seldom appear "in female productions".[4]

In part, this uncharacteristic restraint was a mark of respect--Macaulay was one of the few women Wollstonecraft believed could speak for herself. But it is also as if she could not quite believe that a woman--however exceptional--had dared to write thus on the question of women and their education, had dared to suggest that the exceptional might very well turn out to be the ordinary. But if Wollstonecraft had been at all humbled, awed, or inspired by Macaulay's latest achievement, such emotions were soon swept away by considerations of a more immediate nature--and the woman question set temporarily aside for the rights of men.

The French Revolution had by late 1790 set England ablaze with conflicting sympathies. The early reaction to the fall of the Bastille --the feeling that France was at last going to abandon its absolutist form of government and join the modern civilized world epitomized in the British system--had polarized. Many now feared that the democracy or the perfection England had achieved over long centuries of slow steady progress was being endangered by the madmen across the Channel. Others, and with these Wollstonecraft and the whole Johnson circle must be ranked, believed that England was far from perfect and saw in the Revolution the living proof of the possibility of change, believed that Man was at last proving himself worthy of the Divine elements of his nature by undertaking to perfect himself and his society. Between William Wordsworth's "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive"[5] and Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France there was a world of difference, and it was not a difference anyone felt like debating coolly or rationally.

By November 1790 when Reflections on the Revolution in France appeared, Burke had already made anti-revolutionary speeches in the House of Commons, and no one expected his book to come out in favour of the Revolution. But neither had anyone expected such a thorough and unmitigated attack on all the principles English radicals held so dear. Moreover, many felt personally betrayed by Burke, who had been a fervent supporter of liberal causes (including the American Revolution) for years, and they could not see how the distinctions he drew in his Reflections could be reconciled with his earlier views.[6]

Wollstonecraft read the book and was outraged. But it was not just her new loyalities and sensibilities that suffered. The full title of Burke's book was Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings of Certain Societies in London Relative to That Event; Reflections was not only an answer to, but an attack upon the reasoning that had led Wollstonecraft's old friend Richard Price to come out in favour of the Revolution the previous year at the Society for Commemorating the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Wollstonecraft read the book as a clearly immoral attack upon a moral man; in defence of her new principles and her old friends, she picked up her pen in a blaze of indignation to refute Reflections and the man who was capable of writing it.

The result was A Vindication of the Rights of Men, a book without a scrap of the deference that any young woman owed to a man of Burke's age and reputation. A man who had denied the natural inalienable rights of man and who had attacked a man of Price's moral calibre did not, in Wollstonecraft's eyes, deserve respect. At her parents' knees, she had learned that submission and obedience were somehow expected to be their own reward. She had seen the lesson confirmed again and again in the world around her. Now, relatively secure in her new life and sure of her friends' esteem, she abandoned obedience once and for all for defiance and contempt. "There is", she says in A Vindication of the Rights of Men, "no end to this implicit submission to authority--some where it must stop, or we return to barbarism".[7]

Simply put, the argument of A Vindication of the Rights of Men is this: "virtue can only flourish among equals"; virtue was based on reason; Burke's "libertine imagination" and his unmanly sentimentality had deranged his reason; therefore, the claims of his book were closer to the ravings of a madman than to the voice of reason he purported them to represent. In a word, Burke claimed the French were mad, and Wollstonecraft claimed much the same of him. She attacked his reverence for antiquity, heredity, and the rich; accused him of ambition, hypocrisy, vanity, envy, and sensuality; and argued that he possessed the kind of debauched sensibility which would weep for a corrupt queen while it complacently watched the poor starve. And with considerable effectiveness, and in great detail, she undermined the basic tenet of his argument, by taking his view of England as Utopia and holding it up to ridicule: "Security of property! Behold, in a few words, the definition of English liberty. And to this selfish principle every nobler one is sacrificed".[8]

A Vindication of the Rights of Men is a powerful polemic. Its lack of restraint, its disorganization, its repetitions and digressions have been frequently criticized, but one thing that no one has ever doubted is its absolute sincerity. In his "From vir bonus to Symbolic Dancer: Mary Wollstonecraft's Polemical Style", Gary Kelly argues that the "flaws" in Wollstonecraft's prose style were deliberate, part of an attempt to develop "a controversial style and a literary identity that was both personal and public". She was, in other words, attempting to use the knowledge she had acquired and the skills she had mastered over the past three years, attempting to use language (and here, she drew on the ideas of men like Price, Fuseli, and Blair), to embody, as Kelly says, "the activity of the whole mind" and to turn the weaknesses of a woman's education and the "supposed weaknesses" of her mind into "rhetorical strengths". All of Wollstonecraft's work was an attempt to reconcile opposites or to "embrace contraries", but, unlike the early work, The Rights of Men approaches the problem of reconciliation largely in stylistic terms, and, unlike its predecessors, it was by and large a successful experiment.[9]

Wollstonecraft had sensed the significance and the impropriety of her entrance into the pamphlet war, and halfway through the composition of her answer to Burke, she decided to abandon it. Johnson, by acquiescing in her decision to retreat, "piqued her pride",[10] and setting her misgivings aside, she returned to work. But the first edition of the Vindication of the Rights of Men--one of the earliest replies to Burke to appear in print--was published anonymously; the second edition --published 14 December 1790--carried her name on the title page and permanently closed the door on peaceful obscurity.

Wollstonecraft had forsaken feminine modesty, propriety, and humility, and she had done so publicly. The result was not calumny, but recognition: her book received more praise than criticism, and almost overnight she became a public figure. Godwin claims that the applause The Rights of Men received "elevated the tone of her mind"[11] and increased the already considerable confidence she had in her intellectual powers. She was no longer a Barbauld or a Chapone, but a Macaulay, and, as if to prove the point, she returned to the strictures outlined in Macaulay's Letters on Education. A Vindication of the Rights of Men had proposed manly virtues and condemned "unmanly servility".[12] Now, Wollstonecraft set out to make it clear that when she had spoken of the rights of men she had meant human not male rights. Women, too, must reject servitude and become truly manly, if they were to be virtuous wives, mothers, and citizens of the new age.

Wollstonecraft's demand that the re-evaluation of the power structure, of the relationship of man to man and men to government, be extended to the rights of woman was a logical continuation of French revolutionary ideals. But, although logical, it was neither obvious nor dispassionate. The writing of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman was occasioned, at least in part, by the news that Talleyrand's proposals for education in revolutionary France did not intend to substantially alter either the traditional role of women in society or the domestic nature of feminine education.[13] Men would be citizens; women wives. Wollstonecraft's answer to this decision was not merely a discussion of abstract rights, for, while it was dedicated to changing attitudes in general and Talleyrand's in particular, this time the attitudes she wished to change were ones which had affected her personally from the day she had been born. She knew from experience the problems of being a woman struggling to hold her own in a man's world, and the oppression she denounced was an oppression she had lived with all her life.

The very fact that society's exploitation of women could be and often was accepted as protection, and not oppression at all, only made matters worse, as it led (as Wollstonecraft well knew) to confusion and self-doubt. The most appalling thing that happened to women was not that men thought them by nature dependent and incapable of intellect, but that, having been brought up with such notions, women themselves not only accepted the view, but, accepting it, conformed to it and, indeed, became mindless dependents:

> Women are everywhere in this deplorable state; for, in order to preserve their innocence, as ignorance is courteously termed, truth is hidden from them, and they are made to assume an artificial character before their faculties have acquired any strength. Taught from infancy that beauty is a woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adore its prison.[14]

The Rights of Woman is, then, a highly personal book, a cry of anger and despair and hope which emerged out of its author's experience and her personality. But it is also a political treatise, a moral essay, an educational tract, and a psychological study, and it emerged fully as much from its author's mind and her education as from her emotions and her experience. An anonymous reviewer for The Analytical had (in 1788) claimed Wollstonecraft's Original Stories was obviously "the production of a mind that can think and feel";[15] it was not a bad description of the stories, but it is a perfect one of the second Vindication. And, as in Original Stories, it is the shifts of tone in the narrative or authorial voice (from earnestly serious to contemptuously defiant, from supplicating to demanding) and the rhythm of the prose (alternately rhetorical and analytical, poetically lyrical and prosaically descriptive) that gives the Vindication its power. Despite the fact that its ideas were not altogether new, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman is an original and brilliant book: the tone and structure of its argument organize and unify what were, to some extent, typical criticisms of women's education into a polemical work, in which it is impossible to separate the content from the style which made it truly revolutionary.

If the feminist argument presented in the Rights of Woman is not itself well-known, it is at least well-known by proxy, for it anticipated almost every point that feminists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would raise, points which by now have become commonplace. But they were far from commonplace in 1792. Wollstonecraft argued that until women could support themselves they would remain oppressed; that cultural conditioning had psychological effects for both sexes and turned men into tyrants, sensualists, and fools as surely as it made women vain, silly, and either helplessly dependent or cunningly power-hungry; that unless women were included as full and equal partners in society they would subvert the progress of the whole human race; that woman was formed as a helpmate, not a playmate, for man; and that, in denying women reason, men denied them souls and thus denied their very real duties to God, themselves, and their children. Prevailing attitudes towards women were in Wollstonecraft's eyes immoral, because they denied women the very basis for morality--intelligence and freedom--and thus created the very vices they claimed to abhor. If women were to be virtuous, then they must be free, equal, and independent: "This", she says, "was Rousseau's opinion respecting men: I extend it to women".[16]

Wollstonecraft was willing to concede that women _might_ prove to be less capable of true virtue than men, but she was adamant on two points. First (and here her debt to Price is clear), that without reason there was no virtue at all. And second, that, even if a woman could not achieve the same "degree" of virtue as a man could, it must still be "the same in nature";[17] consequently, what was virtuous in a man was also virtuous in a woman, and the conduct and education of both sexes must be founded on the same principles and have exactly the same aim.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman is perhaps the first truly feminist book in the English language, and this is true less because of what it says than because of how it says it. Indeed, nearly everything that Wollstonecraft said in _A Vindication_, she (and others) had said before, but now the tone in which she asserted herself had changed, as had the thorough determination with which she pursued the implications of her arguments through to their logical conclusions. Despite its obvious reliance upon education as a cure for the deplorable situation it describes, _A Vindication_ offers surprisingly few concrete proposals regarding schooling.[18] Indeed, it seems to offer few direct recommendations of any kind beyond the relatively straightforward demand that women learn to think for themselves. On the thematic or content level, A Vindication is, in fact, simply the documentation of facts and the presentation of arguments which, in its author's eyes, both explain and justify her plea for change. The subtler aspects of its argument are embodied in its experimentation with language.

At the beginning of the book, Wollstonecraft announces that she wishes to deal with "things, not words", because truth is often "lost in a mist of words".[19] She is, however, forced to deal in words, and her desire to use them to serve truth, and not to mask it, involves her in a linguistic endeavour which forms the whole structure of her argument. And in this, too, if she did not create, she certainly anticipated what has come to be known as the feminist tradition, for the books that followed (and it is interesting to note that exceptions to this rule have tended to be authored by male, rather than female, feminists) would, by and large, adopt her method of attacking through language--through metaphor, analogy, the juxtaposition of opposites--thus stripping away the meaningless civilities which surround feminine subjection and clothe it in false glamour and false chivalry.

Language, asserts Wollstonecraft, is the "drapery" which conceals truth and attempts to make the false real. Once certain attitudes, false or not, become institutionalized in language, only the application of a more candid and brutal kind of language which reveals things for what they truly are can correct the situation. Women's subjection had, in fact, been created largely by words, and thus only words could destroy it. The psychological sophistication of Wollstonecraft's argument is too complex to detail here, but, in essence, it claimed that to be "feminine", in what she calls "the masculine acceptation of the word", was to choose "manners" over "morals", "elegancy" over "virtue", and "superficial graces" over "immutable principles". It was in fact to choose sexuality over humanity, alienation and fragmentation over wholeness, and appearance over reality.[20]

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman is dedicated to proving that women could think and to demonstrating that they might break free of their situation simply by beginning to think about it. It is an exercise in self-determination or redefinition undertaken by a woman and thus is itself a metaphor for the female mind which is attempting to free itself, attempting to capture not only the truth of reason, but the emotion of thinking. Wollstonecraft wrote down what she thought as she thought it, without forcing her ideas into logical patterns, organizing her thoughts into predetermined shapes, or attempting to curb the associations to which her mind naturally led her or to restrain the digressive quality of those associations in prose. To do these things would, she believed, be a falsification of the truth of the mind's processes and a betrayal of her own particular genius. "I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style", she said in her Introduction to the first edition of the Rights of Woman.[21] She in fact refused—and nowhere is that refusal more apparent than in her style of rapid composition and uncensored flow of emotion and thought—to conform to the rules of logical cogent argument laid down by men.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman is a great book, and, like many great books, part of its greatness may be traced to its author's arrogance. Wollstonecraft's arrogance, or so it can be argued, was justified, for she had succeeded largely by her own efforts in educating herself, establishing a career, and securing an independence in a manner few women of her century were to achieve. But justified or not, it was out of her arrogance, her supreme belief in her own mind, that the style of the Vindication emerged, and at its best that style achieved a force, an eloquence, and a simplicity that have rarely been surpassed in educational, feminist, or polemical literature.

The two Vindications—the first published in late 1790, the second in early 1792, and both, initially, receiving largely favourable critical reception—represented personal vindication for Wollstonecraft. They made her famous and guaranteed her independence by the simple process of ensuring that anything she wrote would be both published and read. But more importantly, they are the biography of this part of her life, for they not only represent but document an intellectual revolution in her thought. On a personal level, the second Vindication (written in a short six weeks, but representing thirty odd years of resentment, repression, and denial)[22] was particularly significant, for the writing of it made of her a new woman and led to the emotional upheaval that soon followed.

The early years of Wollstonecraft's career had been an attempt to supress her unruly emotions by devoting herself to what she saw as duty: the mothering of a circle of siblings and dependents who never quite seemed to live up to her expectations of them. In 1787 she had struck out on her own and devoted herself to work; loneliness and frustration continued to plague her from time to time, but the years of her apprenticeship and her early success were on the whole happy. By 1792 she had achieved what she had set out to do, and, after the first flush of success, she discovered that alone it was not enough.

After the first Vindication, Miss Wollstonecraft, as a mark of her achievement, became Mrs. Wollstonecraft, and somewhere too about this time, she became one of *The Analytical*'s editorial staff (as well as continuing to be one of its reviewers). By September 1791 (shortly before the writing of the second *Vindication*) she moved to more spacious quarters and began to spend a little more time and money on herself. The stage of self-imposed asceticism which had arisen out of financial and what Wollstonecraft had seen as moral necessity was ending, and by 1792 her brother Charles saw fit to remark that she had "grown quite handsome", for "being conscious that she is on the wrong side of Thirty she now endeavors to set off those charms (she *once* despised) to the best advantage".[23] Success, and the changes it had created in Wollstonecraft's attitude towards herself, led to a new blossoming, and it, in turn, led almost immediately to new problems.

The first problem was not exactly new, for Wollstonecraft's relationships with various members of her family had been strained for some time.[24] She continued to contribute to their support and to offer a kind of maternal encouragement, but she had come to deeply resent the dependence she had once been only too happy to foster. For their part, James, Charles, Everina, and in particular Eliza still seemed to regard it as their elder sister's duty not only to help them out occasionally, but to rescue them by reestablishing the family home. Her family may have envied, but they did not resent her success; they merely wanted to share it. Wollstonecraft, however, was tired of sharing and quite tired of subjecting her needs to those of her family. By 1792 she had made it clear that other things and other people came before her brothers and sisters and that she possessed new responsibilities and desires which had superceded the old. It had not been an easy decision for Wollstonecraft to make; indeed it had taken her several years to finalize and act upon it, but it was made less painful (for her) by the transfer of emotional involvement to Johnson and his circle of friends in general and in particular to one man in that circle. And, indeed, this was the second problem.

Wollstonecraft had known Henri Fuseli for some time—perhaps as early as 1788 and certainly by 1790 if not before. From 1790 to 1792 they were intimate friends whose shared passions for painting, Rousseau, and the French Revolution brought them closer than they might otherwise have been. Fuseli was a complex character: a man of strong passions, torrential conversational powers, violent temper, caustic wit, and formidable intellect, who also possessed an unshakeable belief in his own genius. He was a painter, critic, writer, classical scholar, linguist, and a self-styled genius obsessed with developing a style in both literature and art which would express his unique talents.[25] A pupil of his once remarked that Fuseli destroyed "weak minds", but "had the art of inspiring young minds with grand and high views".[26]

Wollstonecraft's mind was not weak, and it is not unreasonable to assume that in conversation with Fuseli she found an articulate rationale for her own belief in speaking and writing from the heart—a rationale which, as Kelly says, clearly distinguished true from false oratory, genius from memory, and truth from expediency.[27] If nothing else, Fuseli stimulated her idealism and her desire to prove herself; most certainly, wittingly or not, his arrogance fostered the development of her own and increased her willingness to view her righteous indignation as a sign of her original mind, a mark of her own genius. Thus, whatever the more direct impact of his thought on her ideas might have been, the Vindications were, to some extent, products of Wollstonecraft's relationship with Fuseli, because they were the immediate result of her confidence in her own powers.

Fuseli saw himself as the voice of genius, an artist who scorned convention, but in his private life he had, by the 1790s, become more circumspect and was, in fact, in danger of becoming that most conventional of characters: the married man who was quite prepared, on one hand, to encourage any young female who admired and flattered him and, on the other, to retreat in moral outrage if he perceived his attentions to be taken with a degree of seriousness that could threaten either his "respectability" or his marriage. To be fair, the degree of Fuseli's emotional involvement with Wollstonecraft, or the extent to which he encouraged her in her feelings for him, is not known, although it is a much debated point amongst Wollstonecraft biographers. Of Wollstonecraft's involvement, on the other hand, there can be no doubt. She began by valuing his mind and his friendship, but by 1792 she had convinced herself that his wife was unworthy of him, and by November she had decided to reconcile her passion with her principles, by leaving his person to his wife, but claiming his soul and mind for her own.

After what must have been a painful and humiliating scene with his wife (in which Wollstonecraft, evidently, requested permission to become part of the family and was told by Fuseli's wife--and by Fuseli himself according to some sources--to stop bothering them), she was at last forced to recognize that her feelings for Fuseli were no longer based solely on admiration for his soul and appreciation of his genius. What she had regarded as a platonic and, therefore, innocent attachment became in her own eyes a dangerous situation at best, a criminal passion at worst. She had rejected two separate offers of marriage from men she did not love, and now she loved a man she could not have.

She, Johnson, Fuseli, and Fuseli's wife, Sophia, had planned a trip to France.[28] Wollstonecraft went alone, but the woman who left for the Continent in December 1792 was a different one from the young and puritanical spinster who had come to London in 1787 to establish herself as an author. She would continue to study and write, just as she would continue to cherish her independence, but the last years of her life would not be devoted to work, but to the search for personal happiness and emotional fulfillment.

The New Woman: An Unfinished Story (1793-1797)

> For years have I endeavoured to calm an impetuous tide--labouring to make my feelings take an orderly course.--It was striving against the stream.--I must love and admire with warmth, or I sink into sadness.
>
> --Mary Wollstonecraft, Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.

Despite Wollstonecraft's nervous and emotional complaints, and her oft-voiced pessimism and gloom, the first thirty years of her life had been characterized by an unfailing energy of action which revealed her essential optimism and courage. Thirty years of struggling against defeat and failure, in whatever guise they might present themselves, had led to the Vindications and to her new reputation as the woman of the day. When she thanked God for giving her an "active mind" (which "if it does not smooth" at least "enables me to jump over the rough places in life"), it was with good reason, as it was the active powers of her mind that had rescued her first from poverty and then from obscurity and allowed her to build a career and an independent life for herself.[29]

But by 1793 that life had been left behind and left in ruins. That the ruins were at least in part of her own making, she well knew:

> I am mere animal, and instinctive emotions too often silence the suggestions of reason. ... I

> have nourished a sickly kind of delicacy, which gives me many unnecessary pangs.--I acknowledge that life is but a jest--and often a frightful dream--yet catch myself every day searching for something serious--and feel real misery from the disappointment. I am a strange compound of weakness and resolution! ... There is certainly a great defect in my mind--my wayward heart creates its own misery--why I am made thus I cannot tell; and, till I can form some idea of the whole of my existence, I must be content to weep and dance like a child--long for a toy, and be tired of it as soon as I get it. ... Surely I am a fool--[30]

But, however much she may have felt the pressure of her emotions, until late into 1792 Wollstonecraft had kept a tight reign on them and had rarely played the fool. She had no doubt entertained unrealistic views of progress and perfectibility and had expected herself and others to live up to them, but between 1790 and 1792, in particular, she had, for the large part, maintained them in the cool confident voice of reason and used rational argument to curb her own emotions and to remain somewhat aloof from her own enthusiasms.

It would be going too far to say that from 1790 to 1792 Wollstonecraft's passions had been completely intellectualized, but there is enough truth in the contention to insist that she was in those years to some degree protected from bitterness, disappointment, and despair, by some combination of the strength of her reason and the pervasiveness of her intellectual rationalizations. Now, both private and public events; and her willingness to actively participate in their emotional turmoil, would take a turn that would test her faith in God, in progress, and in herself as never before. In the process it would reawaken old terrors and create new joys.

Wollstonecraft arrived in France sometime in mid-December 1792, prepared to find herself in basic sympathy with the revolutionary cause and the new society it had created. Instead, she found herself lonely, irritated by her inability to communicate in French, and less than pleased with what she saw of the French character and the French idea of revolutionary society. She set to work mastering the language (which she could read and write but neither speak nor understand adequately) and was quickly accepted into the circle of British and American expatriates in Paris, a circle which included Thomas and Rebecca Christie, Helen Maria Williams and John Hurford Stone, Joel Barlow, and, of course, Thomas Paine, author of The Rights of Man, now a citizen of France and member of the National Convention. Joel Barlow would later be joined by his wife, Ruth, with whom Wollstonecraft was already good friends; as well, through men like Paine and Christie, Wollstonecraft would become friendly with various members of the Girondin party, for people like Madame Roland, Brissot, and Condorcet were always willing to welcome foreigners in support of their cause. The language problem had been tackled and the loneliness conquered, but Wollstonecraft's disappointment in the Revolution was harder to cope with--her faith had been badly shaken.

The trial of the king and his subsequent execution on 21 January 1793 unnerved her, the more so as she found herself moved by the monarchial dignity she had expected only to despise. Worse yet, was the petty "pride of office" she observed all around her and her growing suspicion that the Revolution had changed "names, not principles", that the aristocracy of birth had been levelled only to make way for that of riches, equally immoral and inexpressibly more vulgar.[31] Early in 1793 Wollstonecraft began work on her "Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation" which was intended to be one of a series of commentaries on the progress of the revolution. It was the only one she wrote and was not published until after her death; in it, she claimed that

> ... the perspective of the golden age, fading before the attentive eye of observation, almost eludes my sight; and, losing thus in part my theory of a more perfect state, start not, my friend, if I bring forward an opinion, which at the first glance seems to be levelled against the existence of God! I am not become an Atheist, I assure you, by residing at Paris: yet I begin to fear that vice, or, if you will, evil, is the grand mobile of action, and that, when the passions are justly poized, we become harmless, and in the same proportion useless.[32]

In retrospect, the suspicions Wollstonecraft gave voice to in her "Letter" seem almost uncanny, for events in revolutionary France were about to take the turn that has for many ever since justified Burke's initial denunciation of the madmen across the Channel who thought they could change the course of history and human nature overnight. By February 1793 England and France were at war, and foreigners in France suspect. By the spring, control in the National Convention had passed from the moderate Girondins to the Montagnes or Jacobins, Robespierre was in command, the Reign of Terror and purification by the guillotine had begun.

In May 1793, The Girondins (many of whom were Wollstonecraft's friends and whose political views she shared) were arrested. In October, all those British citizens who had not had enough sense to leave, or who were not already in prison, were arrested and incarcerated, and the guillotine claimed the Queen of France, Brissot and twenty of his fellow-compatriots of the now judged too-moderate Girondin party. In November, Olympe de Gouges and Madame Roland followed the others to their fate. The Terror continued into the new year; in July 1794 Robespierre himself fell victim to it, and so it ended.

Most of Wollstonecraft's friends were jailed or executed during the Terror. She herself escaped only because of her relationship with

Gilbert Imlay, an American, who had had the foresight to register her at the American embassy as his wife. And she would not have escaped even then, if her letters had been intercepted, or if the content of her history of the revolution (which she had been advised to burn) had been generally known, or if anyone of importance, or malice, had been present the day she could not stop herself from recoiling in articulate horror from the fresh blood at the foot of the guillotine.

Wollstonecraft's attitude to this aspect of the Revolution is best embodied in a letter she wrote to Ruth Barlow in July 1794:

> The French will carry all before them--but, my God, how many victims fall beneath the sword and the Guillotine! My blood runs cold, and I sicken at the thought of a Revolution which costs so much blood and bitter tears.[33]

But, ironically, the very excesses of those in power seemed to restore her faith in the French people as a whole. And if her An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution and the Effect It has Produced in Europe, which she worked on from June 1793 to March 1794 (during the Terror itself), would not have met with Robespierre's approval, neither would it have met with Burke's.

Wollstonecraft expected that her history of the Revolution would comprise several volumes. Thus An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution, which was intended to be the first of the series, is limited to the very early months of the Revolution or events that occurred a good three years before her arrival in France. Nonetheless, even her perspective on those first months had been altered by her residence in France during the Terror, and her history begins by admitting that the violent excesses of the Revolution could not fail to alienate sympathy, nor to call into question the very principles on which the Revolution had been based.

The "despotism of licentious freedom", "the snap of the guillotine", "the disgusting conceit and wretched egotism" of the French gave good cause for despair, but they also, in Wollstonecraft's opinion, tempted one to heed "the erroneous inferences of sensibility" rather than the voice of reason. Reason could not excuse, but it could explain the bloody course France had taken and explain it in such a way as to leave revolutionary principles clear of blame. The French character, argues Wollstonecraft, had been formed by long centuries of brutal repression, corrupted by "an absolute government, a domineering priesthood, and a great inequality of fortune". French education and French culture had conspired to poison "the genial current of natural feelings" and to subvert the "natural" laws of humanity and had produced in the Frenchman a highly artificial or wantonly brutalized character, perhaps the least equipped in all Europe to undertake the real business of a revolution against corruption and tyranny, precisely because tyranny and corruption had been the rule for so long in France. Thus, the violence and bloodlust released in the Revolution were not so much products of the new freedom, as reactions to the ancient regime: "the rich and poor were separated into bands of tyrants and slaves", says Wollstonecraft, "and the retaliation of slaves is always terrible".[34]

An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution is, then, a reaffirmation of Wollstonecraft's liberal principles, a testament to the fact that while her faith had been shaken, it had not been destroyed. It denies the doctrine of original sin, asserts that the natural state of man is a happy and virtuous one, argues that cultural forces can warp man's natural character, and claims that perfection is not found in nature, but in a civilization which scorns artifice in favour of tailoring itself to the best in man's nature. The best in man's nature was, of course, his mind, and Wollstonecraft warns that the real danger to progress and to revolutionary principles is not the discharge of violence (which, however despicable, is a temporary reaction), but the establishment of "an aristocracy of wealth" and the development of an economy based on "division of labour", which would render the mind "entirely inactive" and turn modern man into a machine.[35] But despite worries like this, Wollstonecraft's belief in the perfectibility of man and the "sure, though gradual pace"[36] of the improvement moral philosophy would confer upon society had survived Robespierre's reign. In the midst of terror, she had regained her basic optimism, and An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution, written during the Terror itself, was her testament to the revival of this faith:

> A change of character cannot be so sudden as some sanguine calculators expect .... As a change also of the system of education and domestic manners will be a natural consequence of the revolution, the French will insensibly rise to a dignity of character far above that of the present race; and then the fruit of their liberty, ripening gradually, will have a relish not to be expected during its crude and forced state.[37]

Wollstonecraft finished her history sometime early in 1794; it was published late the same year, reasonably well-received in England, and reissued in 1795. Why Wollstonecraft did not then continue with her plan to write a series of works on the Revolution remains a mystery. Perhaps, she doubted her abilities as an historian, decided it was impossible to write the history of so recent an event, or merely despaired at her lack of access to proper research materials and facilities. Perhaps, the struggle to regain her faith had wearied her, at least to the point, where she could not yet face documenting the events leading up to the Terror, let alone the Terror itself; certainly it is true that what she had seen of revolutionary government had tamed and subdued her optimism, and in consequence what her history achieves in balance and maturity it lacks in passion and authority, the very qualities that had made her Vindications such splendid polemics.[38] Or perhaps, it had to do with the mounting pressure of private, not public, events, for among other things the Terror produced good reasons for clinging to whatever happiness could be found, and, all the time she was writing her history, Wollstonecraft was involved in a far more personal experiment with revolutionary principles.

Mary Wollstonecraft met Gilbert Imlay, an American adventurer, veteran of the American revolutionary army, and newly-turned author, sometime early in 1793 at the Christie home in Paris. She was thirty-four; he was thirty-nine. Although she does not seem to have known it, and was never to accept it, he was by nature a libertine; she was by circumstance a sexual innocent and a puritan of sorts, although not destined to remain either for much longer. She did not much like him at first, but by June 1793 when she moved from Paris to Neuilly (a small village on the outskirts of Paris), they were at least friends, for he visited her there.

Played against a backdrop of public drama and terror, Wollstonecraft's private life became an almost idyllic retreat, an island of personal happiness in a sea of despair. By August (if not sooner) Wollstonecraft and Imlay had become lovers, although they had not married and had made no plans to do so. Even pregnancy, although undoubtedly also unplanned, does not seem to have unduly upset either of them, and long before the actual birth, both Wollstonecraft and Imlay seem to have regarded the child as growing proof of its parents' tender attachment, rather than a social embarrassment or an unwelcome bond.

In September Wollstonecraft returned to Paris to live openly with Imlay, and to ensure her safety he registered her at the American embassy as his wife. Whether the couple regarded this as tantamount to marriage or merely as an expedient measure to protect Wollstonecraft from the backlash of the Terror on British citizens is not really known.[39] What is clear is that, at least in Wollstonecraft's eyes, their relationship was as sacred as any marriage, and she did not feel she had to claim the sanction of either the law or the church to make it so. This was not, after all, a relationship dedicated to the rules of prudence, but to those of love and conscience. It was an experiment undertaken in a new world with a new spirit: "I like the word affection, because it signifies something habitual", Wollstonecraft wrote to her lover, "and we are soon to meet, to try whether we have mind enough to keep our hearts warm".[40] She sometimes referred to Imlay as her husband or referred to herself as his wife--as did he--but from the beginning, she made it clear that if he ceased to love her she would end the relationship and fend for herself and her child. But she did not envision such failure and when it came was not prepared for it.

Shortly after Wollstonecraft's return to Paris, Imlay had to leave for Le Havre on business. She joined him there in January, and for a short six months they shared a happy domesticity. On 14 May 1794 their daughter, Fanny, was born and drew the couple even closer together.

Like all affairs or marriages, the Wollstonecraft-Imlay liasion had its problems. The four months separation before their reunion at Le Havre had been particularly painful for Wollstonecraft, who seems to have been surprised by the depth of the passion Imlay had awakened in her and confused by the ambivalence of her own response which centered in a deep suspicion of the incredible feelings of happiness threatening to overwhelm her. Imlay, on the other hand, was flattered by the love and trust she placed in him, equally quick to complain of delayed letters or imagined coolness, but frequently irritated, as men will be, by her oft-repeated opinion that ambition, wealth, and fame were not at all important when compared to the affairs of the heart.

Wollstonecraft could well afford to be noble about poverty, as she had faced it before and knew, as well, that if it came to that, she could well support herself. Imlay, however, was no more interested in poverty than obscurity and was no doubt troubled by the knowledge that the author of the Vindications could well afford to be more sanguine about ambition and fame than the author of A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America and The Emigrants.[41] Imlay, too, was an author, but his books had brought him sufficient quantities of neither money nor fame. He was, therefore, definitely interested in adventurous schemes of all sorts, and all of them promised profit. From the beginning, his business activities--or what Wollstonecraft referred to as his "money-getting face"[42]--were a bone of contention between them them, but not, initially, much more than that. The six months in Le Havre, and the three months of togetherness in Neuilly that preceded them, seem, on the whole, to have been happy months for both Mary Wollstonecraft and Gilbert Imlay, months in which they planned their future life together on a small farm in America surrounded by their offspring, months in which their love seemed to be justifying the new experiment and fulfilling the promise of the new world.

Sometime late in the summer or early in the fall of 1794, their domesticity was, for a second time, interrupted by business. Imlay left for Paris and then London; Wollstonecraft closed up the house at Le Havre and moved herself and Fanny to Paris to await his return. The separation, expected to last two or three months, dragged on and on, with business and more business as the excuse. As the months went by, Wollstonecraft's graceful and often playful acceptance of the distance between them turned slowly into spirited impatience and then into serious worry. After eight months, she was nearly frantic and, although reluctant to return to England, agreed, at Imlay's urging, to meet him in London.

But this time reunion did not solve the problems. Imlay's passion for her had cooled to the extent that he had allowed himself to become involved in another affair which was, however, he assured her, a strictly sexual alliance which would shortly play itself out. Moreover, while he claimed to still love her, he now seems to have advanced the argument that love and fidelity had little to do with one another and that to expect physical faithfulness from the modern man (like the old one) was a contradiction in terms. This (in Wollstonecraft's opinion) was sophistry not reason, promiscuity not free love. Quite simply, she could not comprehend how any sane human being, male or female, could hold such views. But neither could she break with a man with whom she had known such happiness and who, she was convinced, was the only man she could ever love. She had scorned the convention, but not the sacrament of marriage, and now grief, pride, humiliation, hope, rage at being so shamelessly betrayed, and a fierce longing to recapture her former happiness drove her to the brink of nervous collapse.

Faced with such a situation, and finding herself above all else hopelessly confused, Wollstonecraft appears to have turned to the courtesy books and marriage manuals of the day and, like a proper eighteenth-century wife, set herself to wait things out in compliant silence. But if fidelity was not in Imlay's nature, no more was submissive silence in hers, and her reproach and rage broke forth with all the more force for having been suppressed. What she thought she said, and what she had to say was not music to his ears. Within a month of her arrival in London, the tension between them was (at least for Wollstonecraft) unbearable. She threatened suicide; whether or not she actually attempted it is questionable, but, if she did, it was with but half a heart, for she warned Imlay of her intentions in time for him to subvert them. Afterwards, contrite and penitent, she agreed to live for the sake of her child and allowed herself to be packed off to Scandinavia where Imlay had business that urgently needed attending to.

It was, as every biographer of Wollstonecraft has remarked, a singularly idiosyncratic move for a woman to take herself and her thirteen-month-old baby off on a strange and arduous voyage in service of the commerce she hated and the man who was in the process of abandoning her. It was also a singularly wise move, and three months of once again facing life entirely on her own, articulating on paper the variations in her moods, studying the people and exploring the wild and spectacular countryside of the north did much to restore her to the physical health that anxiety had undermined and to reconcile her to the differences between Imlay's mind and her own.

She spent the summer months of 1795 travelling in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, returned to London in September or October, and one last time succumbed to despair. Within weeks of her homecoming and after a particularly cruel and humiliating scene with Imlay, she decided to commit suicide. This time she was entirely serious; she warned no one and took great pains to ensure that she attracted no notice; she jumped off Putney bridge and was rescued by the merest chance after she had already lost consciousness. Nor, when she found she had been unwillingly dragged back to life, did she repent the attempt.[43]

Still it was not over. She had not yet relinquished all hope, and, though she now once again determined to live for her child (and this time she meant it; there were no more suicide attempts), things between her and Imlay dragged on. But slowly she began to reestablish control over her own life: by late 1795 she had decided to make a book out of her Scandinavian travels, and by early 1796 she was back at work for The Analytical and was reentering London society. In March 1796--some three years after she had first met him--Wollstonecraft wrote her last letter to Imlay:

> It is now finished.--Convinced that you have neither regard nor friendship, I disdain to utter a reproach, though I have had reason to think, that the "forbearance" talked of, has not been very delicate.--It is however of no consequence.--I am glad you are satisfied with your own conduct. ... It is strange that, in spite of all you do, something like conviction forces me to believe, that you are not what you appear to be.
>
> I part with you in peace.[44]

The ordeal was over.

Shortly before the final break, Wollstonecraft retrieved the letters she had written to Imlay.[45] These she evidently kept among her papers, for after her death Godwin published them (in Posthumous Works), an act which outraged his own century and still puzzles ours. Surely it is not common for a husband to make public the passionate love his wife conceived for another man, even if the other man preceded him in her affections. But Godwin was not a common husband. He saw no reason why he should protect Imlay's reputation (the fact that Wollstonecraft had herself promised and had indeed tried to do so was obviously not sufficient reason for Godwin). He believed the letters made Wollstonecraft's innocence perfectly clear. And most of all, he believed the letters had literary merit. He was right.

Wollstonecraft's biographers too often use the Letters to Imlay (also published under the title The Love Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft and included in the Collected Letters) as proof of neurosis. Taken as a whole, they do this only insofar as any human being who has abandoned him or herself to love or to life is neurotic. If anything, the letters demonstrate not Wollstonecraft's but Imlay's "neurosis", for, if he could not live with her, he evidently could not leave her either, and her ambivalence seems to have taken its tone from his.

That the letters are ambivalent there is no doubt, for what is on record is the full range of human emotions, expressed in a style that documents, first, the discovery and, then, the disintegration of the heart's pleasures, while it continually proves the soundness of the mind. The private letters Godwin published cover the whole course of Wollstonecraft's relationship with Imlay; thus, the confident and loving playfulness of the early letters is poignantly counterpointed by the vulnerable and desperate anguish of the later ones, which themselves serve as a counterpoint to those from the same period that Wollstonecraft herself published in Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Predictably, the letters published by Wollstonecraft herself are a good deal less personal and recriminatory in tone and, unlike those Godwin published, rarely sarcastic. They are written to an unnamed friend (obviously Imlay), and while they make no attempt to disguise the author's melancholy or to keep the cause of it a secret, they also reveal a mind that even in the midst of misery continually reasserts its own strength by struggling to give form, shape, and artistic significance to personal experience.

Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, published early in 1796 and drawn in part from the letters Wollstonecraft wrote to Imlay during her trip and in part from the journal in which she faithfully recorded her journey, contains something for everyone. Its poetic delight in the beauties, the sublimities, and the restorative powers of nature have won it a place in the annals of Romanticism. Its social commentary and detailed descriptions of eighteenth-century Scandinavian manners, morals, politics, industry, and childrearing practices capture the attention of the historian and the sociologist. And its persona of the mature but melancholy voice of female experience intent upon self-analysis beguiles both the biographer and the psychologist.

The aim of the Letters is "to form a just idea of the nature of man" or "to trace the progress of the world's improvement". They were Enlightenment ideals, but in the Letters the approach to such questions in not objective analysis, but subjective reflection because, as Wollstonecraft puts it, "we reason deeply, when we forcibly feel". And it is in this sense that the book may be considered not only as a travel book or an autobiographical essay, but as a Romantic prologue, for like all Romantic works, its primary concern is to invest the particular with universal significance or to explore the connection between the moment and its transcendent reality. The particular may be anything from a Scandinavian meal to a sublime view to a soap factory or mining operation to a fleeting memory of happiness or grief; its significance lies in the emotion it creates and, further, in the new insights the imagination forges out of the emotion.[46]

The epistolary travel book was eminently suited to Wollstonecraft's purpose of bringing her own heart and mind to the exploration of the human condition in general. Such an exploration must, however, be undertaken more for the journey itself than for the consistency of the conclusions it produces, for more often than not it creates such a complex interweaving of situations, emotions, and ideas that logical contradictions become next to inevitable. Similarly, prose is not always capable of sustaining either the emotional or intellectual reverie that such intricate patterns demand. Consequently, the Scandinavian Letters often contradict themselves (or seem to) and frequently lapse into prosaic documentation. At their best, however, the content and style of the Letters become one and the same and move from reverie to rhetoric, from the personal to the political, and from the particular to the universal with imaginative grace and intellectual ease.

Throughout both the Letters to Imlay and the Scandinavian Letters there is only one topic into which Wollstonecraft's mature reflection does not introduce doubt or conflict, and that is her affection for her daughter, her "little frolicker", her darling "Fannikan".[47] The legacy of a painful affair and a constant reminder of the man who had fathered her, Fanny, nonetheless, remained in her mother's eyes a source of consolation and delight. She is mentioned several times in the letters Wollstonecraft published, but it is the private ones that testify most movingly to Wollstonecraft's glowing maternal pride. Wollstonecraft had expected to discharge her duties to her infant and to feel a reasonable affection for it, but the role of mother, like that of wife, had taken her by surprise and left a woman who had always given rational sanction to domesticity with a passion for it.[48] It was a side of her character that she had not hitherto recognized or, at least, one she had insufficiently appreciated. She had speculated about the joys created when reason and emotion or head and heart coincided and agreed upon a course, but not until Imlay and Fanny had she felt them. Henceforth, having tasted such happiness, she would find it impossible to forgo, impossible to settle for less.

The last two years of Mary Wollstonecraft's life were spent in London amidst people such as Elizabeth Inchbald, Amelia Alderson, John Opie, Thomas Holcroft, Mary Hays, Maria Reveley, Joseph Johnson, Samuel Coleridge, Robert Southey, and, most of all, William Godwin, whose wife she was to become. Wollstonecraft and Godwin had first met in November 1791 at one of Johnson's dinner parties, from which they had departed none too pleased with each other. But by January 1796, when they renewed their acquaintance, circumstances were different.

Godwin accepted the invitation from Mary Hays to dine in a party that was to include Wollstonecraft with some reservation, and he went fully expecting to meet once again the haughty author of _A Vindication of the Rights of Men_, an author, who had, in his opinion, been only too willing to obtrude her own views when he had wished to hear those of others and had, moreover, seen fit to ridicule what she had seen as his naive optimism and his sentimental good will. He met instead the author of _Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark_, a woman whose softness of manner charmed him. Shortly thereafter he read the Scandinavian _Letters_, a book which he found touched him in a way the _Vindications_ never had: "If ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author", he would later write, "this appears to me to be the book".[49] Indeed, in his eyes, this new Wollstonecraft must have combined the graceful playfulness of Amelia Alderson with the intellectual power of Elizabeth Inchbald, a combination that could not have failed to have its attractions, as Godwin was courting both women at the time Wollstonecraft reentered the scene.

As for Wollstonecraft, in January 1796 she still clung to her hopes of both Imlay and the Revolution; failing reunion with Imlay she planned to return to the Continent, where she believed her daughter's illegitimacy would be less inclined to prejudice society against her and where freedom and equality (especially for women) were more likely to be found. But Wollstonecraft was more than aware enough of the dangers inherent in the temperament of a man like Imlay to allow her to appreciate with new-found warmth the strength of character and the equanimity Godwin so eminently possessed. Moreover, Godwin was not the literary hack she had met in 1791, but the author of the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice and Caleb Williams (published respectively in 1793 and 1794), books which had made him the leading radical philosopher in England. This position had been confirmed by Godwin's courageous intervention in the Treason Trials of 1794, an intervention believed to have saved the lives of the men on trial at considerable risk to his own. It is not, then, surprising that Wollstonecraft would come to regard Godwin as a combination of intellect and integrity, to see in him the qualities of mind that had once attracted her to Fuseli and also the daring to act upon political and philosophical conviction that she had ascribed to Imlay. Godwin, according to Hazlitt, "blazed as a sun in the firmament of reputation",[50] and if Wollstonecraft, having achieved (and still to a very large extent enjoying) her own day in the sun as the most powerful female intellect in all Europe, was not dazzled by the brilliance of his reputation, neither was she immune to it.

By March Wollstonecraft had renounced her hopes of Imlay; by April she and Godwin were friends; by July they had begun a restrained and intellectually playful, a philosophic, flirtation; by August they were lovers; by December Wollstonecraft was once again pregnant, and on 29 March 1797 they married. It was, in Godwin's words, "friendship melting into love";[51] in Wollstonecraft's, "not rapture" but "voluptuous" and "sublime tranquillity".[52]

Both Wollstonecraft and Godwin had been reluctant to marry. Not only was marriage against Godwin's principles, but those principles had gone to press in his Political Justice, and his belief that marriage was an evil society could do without was well-known. Wollstonecraft, too, had dispensed with marriage and not just theoretically. To marry now would expose her, on one hand, to the charge of forsaking her own past and tricking Godwin into renouncing his or, on the other, to social castigation by those who allowed themselves her friendship by pretending that she was Imlay's abandoned wife, a fantasy which would be exploded if she proved free to marry.

But if the decision to marry had been painful, the marriage itself was a brief triumph over past and future alike. It was not, of course, totally without problems. Wollstonecraft's old doubts and fears returned to plague her from time to time and the quickness of her reactions, the vehemence of her suspicions, frequently wounded Godwin, while his clumsiness and his logic could seem like indifference or just plain callousness to her. But, as their letters reveal, the couple quickly became adept at gauging and responding to one another's moods; difficulties were negotiated, disagreements settled, intimacy cherished, and, as the bond between them deepened, each learned to trust and to depend upon the other's particular strengths. Underneath the small spats and the day-to-day chatter lie an enduring respect for each other's work and each other's independence and an intense and mutual delight in each other's company.

Marriage did not really change the way in which they lived. They moved into a house together and frequently entertained guests, but Godwin maintained rooms some twenty doors away where he went each morning to work, while Wollstonecraft retired to her study to do the same. Each had their own friends and usually went out to dinner parties or to the theatre in groups that did not include the other. It was an arrangement that created some problems, but on the whole it appears to have been more than satisfactory for both.

Such was the tenor of their life until 30 August 1797 when Wollstonecraft, expecting to present their son William to his father that day and be down to dinner the next, retired to her chambers to give birth. Because she had delivered Fanny with little difficulty, neither she nor Godwin anticipated complications of any kind. The son William turned out to be the daughter Mary (the future Mary Shelley) and was born late that night. But things were not proceeding normally. Over three hours after the birth the placenta had still not discharged itself, which meant that a doctor had to be sent for and the placenta removed manually. It was an agonizing operation and, as it turned out, an unsuccessful one. At twenty to eight on the morning of September the 10th, after stoically enduring ten days of almost unremitting agony, Wollstonecraft died. Once or twice she had seemed about to recover--but hopes had been roused, only to be dashed, as she once again relapsed into fever and trembling fits so violent they shook the room beneath her.

Her last words were of Godwin: "He is the kindest, best man in the world".[53] Of her, he wrote:

> I firmly believe that there does not exist her equal in the world. I know from experience we were formed to make each other happy. I have not the least expectation that I can now ever know happiness again.[54]

A month and a half after her death, he wrote to a friend of hers of his own grief:

> I love to cherish melancholy. I love to tread the edge of intellectual danger, and just to keep within the line which every moral and intellectual consideration forbids me to overstep, and in this indulgence and this vigilance I place my present luxury.[55]

Of this, too, Mary Wollstonecraft would have approved. Her own life had been a balancing act, never far from the edge of intellectual or emotional danger, and it had been so deliberately. In her first book she had cautioned against straying "too near a precipice, lest we fall over before we are aware",[56] but in her life, as in her works, the philosophy of prudence and realistic accommodation had given way to a finer and braver kind of thought and action.

To dull the pain of his loss, Godwin set immediately to work writing the *Memoirs* and compiling and editing Wollstonecraft's papers for publication in the *Posthumous Works of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"*. Included in *Posthumous Works* was *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria. A Fragment*, the novel Wollstonecraft had worked on almost continuously for the last year of her life. Still, it was less than a third complete, for under Godwin's tutelage, Wollstonecraft had become dissatisfied with her usual style of rapid composition and had determined to write and rewrite this novel until it conformed to her ambitions for it. As the title--*The Wrongs of Woman*--demonstrates, it was intended to be the promised second volume, the counterpart, of her *Rights of Woman*, in much the same manner as Godwin's *Caleb Williams* had fictionalized the themes of his *Political Justice*.[57]

The Wrongs of Woman is, then, a consciously feminist document, but one which combines the *Vindication*'s reasoned, theoretical, and passionate feminism with Original Stories's submerged anger, resentment, suspicion of male conspiracy, and bleak scenes of poverty and cruelty. It is, as Ellen Moers claims, a Gothic novel, in the sense that Wollstonecraft believed "the terrors, the restraints, the dangers of the Gothic novel were not the fantasies but the realities of a woman's life".[58] Gary Kelly's Introduction to the 1976 edition of the novel helps to substantiate such a theory by documenting some of the research that went into the novel's composition, thereby proving that the melodramatic injustices recited by the female characters in the book were not melodrama but fact.

The themes of The Wrongs of Woman are various and include maternal love; what the twentieth century would term "sisterhood"; economic, political, and legal exploitation of women; and the psychological conditioning process, by which sense and sensibility, reason and imagination, self-preservation and compassion were necessarily set at odds with one another. "Was not the world a vast prison", asks Wollstonecraft, "and women born slaves?"[59] The Wrongs of Woman could not, of course, have a happy ending, and its story line (as far as we have it) is an unrelieved succession of exploitation, seduction, and betrayal of women of all classes. But if it deals with enslavement, and, if every other aspect of the novel is subordinated to economic and legal enslavement, it also deals with personal and psychological liberation.

The eighteenth century might have been amused, but it would not have been outraged had Wollstonecraft contented herself with cataloguing the wrongs of woman. It was the "solutions" she offered that gave offence, and give offence they did: much more than the Vindications The Wrongs of Woman seemed to the eighteenth century a clearly immoral and indecent book. This was because the book not only proposes reason and fortitude and the much-touted feminine sensibility or capacity for feeling as avenues to liberation, but also argues women's natural right to passion and sexual pleasure and their social right to divorce on simple grounds of incompatibility.

In her earlier works, Wollstonecraft had deployed the moral philosophy of men like Locke and Price to embody the conflict between the demands of reason and the inclinations of nature, but now reason and nature were clearly allied on one side, opposed to prejudice, oppression, and prudent cynicism on the other. Following Price, Wollstonecraft acknowledges that duties can conflict, but she denies that in any case of doubt the individual should invariably choose the safest course. Similarly, while she remains in complete agreement with her society insofar as she too held that feminine sensibility and imagination when not properly controlled by reason led to grave errors and, in particular, simplified the work of the villain or seducer, in this novel she makes it clear that, even when sentiment, passion, or imaginative genius were treacherous and led to error, they were still less culpable than the "frigid caution" recommended by "cold-blooded moralists". The Wrongs of Woman asserts that women have the natural right to pursue their own happiness, holds that "to fly from pleasure is not to avoid pain", and extends the contention of Wollstonecraft's early works that women, like men, must learn by their own experience and be allowed to make mistakes if they are to profit by them to explicitly include sexuality.[60]

It was, to the eighteenth century as a whole, an argument in favour of promiscuity. It was, no doubt, the argument of a passionate woman, but it was also the argument of a rational moralist who had come to believe that the moral and rational component in sex was affection. Without affection and esteem sex was prostitution and married sex legalized prostitution. The Wrongs of Woman is not, in fact, an argument in favour of promiscuity in the twentieth-century sense because of its stress on the connection between love and affection, because it did not cross its author's mind that the mutual sympathy and respect which, in her opinion, made passion pleasurable could be felt for more than one person at any given time or for very many people in a lifetime. Promiscuity in the sense of casual sex she condemned, and she condemned it as thoroughly for men as for women, because she believed that it impaired and dulled the capacity for sensual pleasure, just as she believed that both frigidity and libertinism corroded the human soul.

If women were to throw off the prejudices demanded by prudence, they must, then, do so without adopting or imitating the vices peculiar to the male of the species. Only thus could they claim their natural rights. Within existing structures, however, warns Wollstonecraft, women who sought liberation could not be guaranteed even safety, let alone happiness. But they could at least secure self-respect and lay claim to their inherent human dignity.

The exact relationship between social enslavement and personal liberation that Wollstonecraft intended to develop in The Wrongs of Woman is not clear. The novel remains unfinished, and it must be admitted that even if it had been finished it is unlikely that it would have been a great novel. Wollstonecraft was too much of a moralist, philosopher, polemicist, and perhaps poet to write a great novel which must to some degree subordinate ideas and emotions to the characters and situations that are to embody them. The Wrongs of Woman is, nonetheless, an interesting novel, even in its unfinished state, and it has not received the attention it deserves largely because it is generally perceived as being an autobiographical account of Wollstonecraft's own life.

The Wrongs of Woman is autobiographical in nature, but autobiography is its methodology not its intention. In other words, Wollstonecraft was not writing her own history, but reconstructing it to write the biography of every woman: "the history ought rather to be considered", she says in her Preface to the book, "as of woman, than of an individual".[61] She had learnt, as Kelly puts it, "that autobiographical fiction could be more objective by paradoxically being more personal".[62] The autobiographer's tool is self-revelation; the biographer's, projection; and, on the whole, The Wrongs of Woman demonstrates Wollstonecraft's ability to manipulate these tools with considerable insight and occasionally with sheer brilliance. As an autobiographer she writes her own history with compelling honesty, but it is the autobiography of her mind not her life. Similarly, her biographical skills are not centered in her ability to recreate situations, but in her ability to describe the effect of experience on the mind, and this she is capable of doing without falling prey to simply rewriting her own history instead of some real or fictional character's.

Biography and autobiography, fact and fiction, reality and fantasy are carefully woven into a literary pattern in The Wrongs of Woman, a pattern which is designed to demonstrate the various effects of oppression on the female mind. It is a point that cannot be made too forcibly, for, in the eagerness to make sense of her life, the complexity of this literary patterning is frequently underrated. This has led not only to the work being undervalued, but to Wollstonecraft's life itself being simplified. When The Wrongs of Women is read as simple autobiography it produces simplistic interpretations and tempts the biographer to compare what he supposes to be the facts with what he supposes

Wollstonecraft supposed to be the facts. And, ironically, while Wollstonecraft biographers are prone to accept the emotions she describes in any situation as being her emotions, they are less inclined to accept her explanations for those emotions. Thus, her insights on the human mind and on her own are frequently appropriated and presented as if the biographer had discovered their true meaning. The most startling example of this is the way in which we are told that Wollstonecraft never loved Imlay because she never saw him as he actually was, but created him almost solely out of wish-fulfilling imagination. This may or may not be true; the real point is that such a notion is not a "modern" biographical or psychological discovery, but one of the dominant themes of The Wrongs of Woman.[63]

It would be unreasonable to object to Wollstonecraft biographers using whatever materials are available to explain and interpret her life, just as it would be childish to insist that she was above human weakness (or even neurosis, if one insists on the modern terminology),[64] but to assume that an eighteenth-century woman could not possibly know the psychological import of what she was writing or feeling, and therefore could not really understand it, is condescension of the worst sort. The woman's work undoubtedly proceeded out of her life, but, however much her work may have been based on personal experience, it was experience consciously shaped into literary and intellectual form. E.P. Thompson's claim that Wollstonecraft was a "major intellectual" of the like "we have rarely seen" is justified.[65] And his criticism of modern reactions to her story deserves attention:

> As for her life: I know that I would not have lived it so well, and I think it arrogant in any biographer to assume, too easily, that it could have been lived better. ... She fell into one or two holes; and she dug herself out,

> with her own nails. ... high-handedness brings down its revenges. Wollstonecraft was prepared for these: but what she does *not* deserve is the revenge of "Poor Mary!" blazoned across a complacent press. She needs no one's condescension. She was poor in nothing. She was never beaten. And the final evidence lies in that part of her which remained a child to the end of the chapter. For that part of her--the refusal to become careful and "knowing", the resilient assent to new experience--is exactly that part which most of us are careful to cauterise, and then to protect with the callouses of our worldly-wise complicities.[66]

To this assessment only one thing needs to be added and that is that, ultimately, as Thompson implies, Wollstonecraft's life needs neither defence nor apology; she would have scorned both, for by the end she had achieved what she had always wanted, and what many strive for but few genuinely attain: knowledge of her own heart and mind, courage to act on her own convictions, and the strength to rest on her own approbation, regardless of the judgment of the world. Those, she wrote, who are

> bold enough to advance before the age they live in, and to throw off, by the force of their own minds, the prejudices which the maturing reason of the world will in time disavow, must learn to brave censure. We ought not to be too anxious respecting the opinion of others.--I am not fond of vindications.--Those who know me will suppose that I acted from principle.--Nay, as we in general give others credit for worth, in proportion as we possess it--I am easy with regard to the opinions of the *best* part of mankind--I *rest* on my own.[67]

NOTES

[1] Flexner, p. 105.

[2] M.W., rev. of *Letters on Education: with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects*, by Catharine Macaulay Graham, *The Analytical Review*, November 1790, p. 249; hereafter cited as M.W., rev. of Macaulay.

[3] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., rev. of Macaulay, p. 246.

[4] M.W., rev. of Macaulay, p. 254.

[5] William Wordsworth, *Prelude* in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Volume II (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1962), Book XI, line 108, p. 166.

[6] Wollstonecraft, in particular, was baffled by what seemed to her the contradiction between Burke's position in *Reflections* on hereditary rights and honors and his argument in 1789 that George III was mad and should be dethroned; the matter was not helped by the fact that Wollstonecraft thought Burke had been unduly hasty in wanting to remove the English king from power and was slavish in *Reflections* in his heralding of the French king's hereditary rights of which he could not under any circumstances be deprived without loosing chaos on the world.

[7] M.W., *V.R.M.*, p. 67.

[8] Quotations in the paragraph are from M.W., *V.R.M.*, pp. 81, 77, and 68 respectively.

[9] Quotations in the paragraph are from Gary Kelly, "From *vir bonus* to Symbolic Dancer: Mary Wollstonecraft's Polemical Style", University of Alberta, Paper presented to University of Alberta English Department, pp. 2, 25, 3, and 25 respectively; hereafter cited as Kelly, "M.W.'s Polemical Style".

[10] Godwin, *Memoirs*, p. 53.

[11] Godwin, *Memoirs*, p. 53.

[12] M.W., *V.R.M.*, p. 71; a phrase also used in *V.R.W.* (see p. 80 for one example).

[13] *V.R.W.* was dedicated to Talleyrand; he probably read the book, but it is unlikely it had any effect on his opinions, although he

did repay the favour of having the book dedicated to him by calling on Wollstonecraft when he visited London in the spring of 1792.

[14] M.W., V.R.W., pp. 82-83.

[15] The Analytical Review, December 1788, pp. 478.

[16] M.W., V.R.W., p. 52.

[17] M.W., V.R.W., p. 75.

[18] See M.W., V.R.W., Chapter XII, pp. 236-265. Mary Wollstonecraft recommends government-controlled day schools for all children between the ages of 5 and 9. This school, in her opinion, should be free, open to all classes of society, and co-educational. The curriculum should include botany, mechanics, astronomy, reading, writing, arithmetic, and natural history, as well as religion, history, and politics. After the age of 9, the child--depending on his or her intellectual abilities or fortune (which she still assumes will have something to do with "the destination of each individual") (p. 251)--should either continue academic study or begin to learn a trade or occupation of some kind as part of his or her education. Physical health and exercise should be stressed for both sexes. False concepts of modesty, says Wollstonecraft, are no excuse for ignorance, and girls in particular should learn the facts of human anatomy and reproduction.

[19] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., V.R.W., pp. 35 and 40.

[20] Quotations in the paragraph are from M.W., V.R.W.; the "masculine acceptation of the word" feminine is from page 257; the other phrases in the paragraph are extremely common in V.R.W. and found throughout the book as a whole--see pages 200-215 in particular.

[21] M.W., V.R.W., p. 34.

[22] Godwin claims that V.R.W. was written in 6 weeks; however, some critics, on the basis of internal evidence and Wollstonecraft's personal letters, have disputed this and argued that Wollstonecraft worked on it for at least 3 months.

[23] "To Eliza Bishop", [1792], Charles Wollstonecraft's Letters, as quoted in Wardle, M.W., p. 170.

[24] Wollstonecraft family relations had never been untroubled and never would be. Relations between Mary Wollstonecraft and her sister Eliza were particularly strained and were rarely free of tension. Wollstonecraft's success and independence added an additional strain to this situation, one which it would never recover from. In 1795 the

break between the two sisters would become open and would remain permanent. Wollstonecraft, needing to protect herself from her family's knowledge of her own desperation over Imlay, was guilty of tactlessness and considerable evasion in attempting to explain to Eliza why she should not rely on "the Imlays" too much. Eliza, for her part, had not considered herself relying on anything but herself; she had, in her own opinion, wanted only solace and had got rejection and insult in return. It ended in a state of complete mutual misunderstanding, and Eliza never forgave or forgot what she took to be her elder sister's complete indifferent callousness towards her.

[25] Fuseli's painting was definitely not orthodox; a copy of his most famous work--The Nightmare--would later hang in Freud's study, and, given its bizarre, almost brutal, and certainly sexual nature, it is not difficult to imagine Freud having seen it as a rather perfect representation of his own theories of subconscious or repressed desires and fears.

[26] Benjamin Robert Haydon, as quoted in Sunstein, p. 183.

[27] See Kelly, "M.W.'s Polemical Style", pp. 4-7.

[28] The four actually seem to have set out in August of 1792, but reaching Dover discovered the alarming turn things had taken in France (the imprisonment of the Royal family and the escalation of mob violence) and decided to turn back.

[29] Quotations in the paragraph are from "To George Blood", February 28 [1789], Letter 81, C.L. of M.W., p. 181.

[30] "To Joseph Johnson", [late 1792], Letter 109, C.L. of M.W., pp. 220-21; Wardle's C.L. of M.W. dates this letter 1792 and connects its content to the Fuseli incident; it has, however, been dated as early as 1788 by other Wollstonecraft scholars.

[31] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., "Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation" in A Wollstonecraft Anthology, ed. & introd. Janet M. Todd (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 124; hereafter cited as M.W., "Letter on ... French Nation".

[32] M.W., "Letter on ... French Nation", p. 122.

[33] "To Ruth Barlow", July 8 [17]94, Letter 142, C.L. of M.W., p. 257.

[34] Quotations in the paragraph are from M.W., An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution and the Effect It has Produced in Europe in A Wollstonecraft Anthology, pp.

132, 132, 138, 126, 137, 139, and 141 respectively; cited hereafter as M.W., French Revolution.

[35] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., French Revolution, p. 140.

[36] M.W., French Revolution, p. 135.

[37] M.W., French Revolution, p. 137.

[38] Indeed, there are passages in the history that sound more like Burke than Wollstonecraft; for example, "Every political good carried to the extreme must be productive of evil ...." (M.W., French Revolution, p. 135).

[39] Some biographers claim that they could not in fact have married, or applied for a license to marry, without calling attention to Wollstonecraft's citizenship and exposing her to danger. Others (including Godwin) believe that Wollstonecraft was reluctant to marry, because it would by law make Imlay responsible for her debts and embroil him in her financial and family affairs. Others, that Wollstonecraft would have preferred marriage, but Imlay, either a seducer or a true believer in free love, persuaded her to defer to his own reluctance to marry. Still others quote from MW's letters to prove that she rather exulted in having achieved the bliss of union without having promised obedience (see in particular "To Ruth Barlow", April 27 17[94], Letter 140, C.L. of M.W., p. 253). The fact is, whatever the reasons, they did not marry. And if Wollstonecraft's own protestations on the matter are to be believed, they never passed themselves off as married: "As I have never concealed the nature of my connection with you", she later wrote when the affair was breaking up, "your reputation will not suffer" ("To Gilbert Imlay", February 10 [1795], Letter 160, C.L. of M.W., p. 279).

[40] "To Gilbert Imlay", [August 1793], Letter 119, C.L. of M.W., p. 233.

[41] The titles of Imlay's books; the first had been published in 1792; the second in 1793.

[42] "To Gilbert Imlay", [December 1793], Letter 124, C.L. of M.W., p. 238.

[43] Wollstonecraft's despair often drove her to incredible lengths; according to Godwin, she suggested to Imlay that she, he, and his new mistress set up house together for the sake of appearances and for the sake of Fanny (Imlay and Wollstonecraft's daughter). Imlay, evidently, thought better of the proposal, or perhaps Wollstonecraft herself recanted. In any case, in this, too, she seems to have been incredibly modern.

[44] "To Gilbert Imlay", [March 1796], Letter 211, C.L. of M.W., pp. 329-30.

[45] Requesting that her letters be returned was obviously some kind of symbolic act signifying her acceptance of the end of the affair. It is interesting to note that at about the same time she got her letters back from Imlay, she requested Fuseli to return the letters she'd written to him between 1790 and 1792. He refused. He also refused Godwin's request to see them after Wollstonecraft's death when he (Godwin) was writing her biography. Knowles, however, had access to the letters when he wrote Fuseli's biography (and quoted a few passages from them in it). Presumably, Fuseli gave the letters to Knowles, Knowles later sold them to Sir Percy Florence Shelley (Wollstonecraft's grandson), who, in turn, is thought to have burnt them to prevent further family scandal.

[46] Quotations in the paragraph are from M.W., Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (1796), rpt. ed. and introd. Carol H. Poston (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), pp. 161, 161, and 160 respectively; cited hereafter as M.W., Letters from Sweden.

[47] Quotations in the sentence are from M.W., Letters from Sweden, pp. 109-10.

[48] Wollstonecraft was probably particularly surprised by her own joy in motherhood because in late 1791 she had unofficially adopted a little girl named Ann, whom she intended to rear as her daughter. The child was packed off to relatives when Wollstonecraft left for France, and no more is heard of her. It was an unfortunate experiment: the child interfered with MW's work and MW herself does not appear to have had the sense to give herself time to get to know the child before more or less giving up on her. It was, no doubt, an unwise and untimely experiment--a substitution for rather than a fruition of other joys--and Wollstonecraft's lack of commitment led to a lack of satisfaction that in no way prepared her for what she would feel for her own child.

[49] Godwin, Memoirs, p. 84.

[50] William Hazlitt, The Spirit of the Age (1825), as quoted in Tomalin, p. 191.

[51] Godwin, Memoirs, p. 100.

[52] "To William Godwin", [1796], Letter 251, C.L. of M.W., pp. 356-57.

[53] As quoted in Flexner, p. 254.

[54] "To Thomas Holcroft", 10 September 1797, William Godwin's Letters, as quoted in Flexner, p. 256.

[55] "To Mrs. Cotton", 24 October 1797, William Godwin's Letters, as quoted in Wardle, M.W., p. 311.

[56] M.W., Thoughts, p. 89.

[57] For elucidation of this point and for a discussion of Godwin's influence upon The Wrongs of Woman, see Gary Kelly, Introduction to to Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. xv-xxi.

[58] Moers, p. 134.

[59] M.W., The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria (1798) in Mary, A Fiction and the Wrongs of Woman, ed. and introd. Gary Kelly (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 79; hereafter cited as M.W., The W. of W.

[60] Quotations in the paragraph are from M.W., The W. of W., p. 127.

[61] M.W., Author's Preface to The W. of W., p. 73.

[62] Kelly, Introduction to Mary and The W. of W., p. xv.

[63] See M.W., The W. of W., pp. 86, 99, 130, 135, and 189 for some examples.

[64] It is, however, interesting to note that biographical analysis more often than not seems single-mindedly intent on uncovering what the critic sees as negative or neurotic qualities in Wollstonecraft's personality. In other words, her work is rarely used to prove that she was understanding or brave or perceptive, but almost always to show how she was hypercritical, demanding, insensitive, etc. For example, the names of the two girls in Original Stories are Caroline and Mary, but no one has ever argued (despite a prevalent fondness for this kind of analysis) that Mary might represent Mary Wollstonecraft herself and Caroline, Caroline Kingsborough, and that MW's contrasting of the two characters proves that Wollstonecraft (who is rarely credited) with seeing anyone's side but her own in a personal argument or conflict) recognized the part of her own (ie. the character Mary is intellectually arrogant, fond of ridicule, sloppy, and never on time: and these are all regarded as moral faults, although perhaps not quite so severe a ones as Caroline's vanity and greed) weaknesses played in the battle of wills between her and Caroline Kingsborough, a battle that had taken place only a few months before MW wrote Original Stories.

[65] E.P. Thompson, "Solitary Walker", rev. of The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft by Claire Tomalin, New Society, 19 September 1974, p. 751.

[66] Thompson, "Solitary Walker", p. 751.

[67] "To Mary Hays (?)", [1797], Letter 346, C.L. of M.W., p. 413 (her emphasis).

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Mary Wollstonecraft's life cannot fail to attract the attention of anyone interested in a good story: the drama and conflict of her family life, the flirtation with Fuseli, the affair with Imlay, the happy ending with Godwin are the stuff of which "popular" novels are made, while the depth and passion of Wollstonecraft's own reactions to her life supply all the necessary ingredients for a "serious" novel. *Any* telling of Wollstonecraft's life is guaranteed to fascinate, not only by the dramatic compulsion of the events that shaped it, but also by the very forcefulness of her personality which, whether approved of or not, encourages moralizing at the same time as it defies categorization.

Mary Wollstonecraft's work can make no such *direct* appeal to either emotion or interest and, forced into constant competition with the unconventionality of her life, is made to seem flat, dull, and commonplace by comparison. Wollstonecraft scholarship has by and large helped to perpetuate the myth of the passionate woman who only incidentally wrote books by concentrating its efforts on biographical or psychological analysis of the life rather than on textual analysis of the works. The truth is that Wollstonecraft was not just a fascinating woman who happened to write, but an eighteenth-century intellectual who would be of little interest today, despite the passionate unconventionality of her life, if she had not written and in particular if she had not written the *Vindications*. The distinction between Wollstonecraft's work and her life is, moreover, an artificial one: reading, studying, writing, and publishing, and continually rethinking her beliefs in the process, changed her. If the progression of thought that is recorded in her work had not occurred, she would not have lived the life that still exerts such fascination. Perhaps this is saying no more than what Wollstonecraft herself meant when she insisted that thought was real and had as much power to shape and control the character as did any external experience or circumstance. In any case, while her work did proceed out of her life, in the final sense that life was as much formed by the intellectual, political, and religious currents of thought of her time and by the quality of her mind as by the accidents of her personal history and the rather passionate nature of her temperament.

This study has attempted to avoid the hasty conclusions that too often result when Wollstonecraft's work is read in a *strictly* biographical context by concentrating on textual analysis and by attempting to place her early work within the pedagogical and female traditions of the day. This attempt has led to three major conclusions. First, that each of the early works--*Original Stories* being the most outstanding in this respect--embodies a complexity of thought that proves it to be worthy of study in its own right. Second, that the early works reveal a pattern of development which contributes to the understanding of Wollstonecraft's work as a whole. And third, that interpretation of this pattern and its relation to Wollstonecraft's later career should clarify Wollstonecraft's particular place of importance within both the pedagogical and female traditions as a whole. The first of these conclusions has been amply demonstrated in the body of the thesis. The second and third have been implied, and a further exploration of their significance will serve to place the work of this study in a broader context.

Wollstonecraft's early work was a series of experimentations: Thoughts on the Education of Daughters was both a woman's courtesy book and a Lockean essay; Mary, A Fiction, a woman's novel and a Rousseauan espousal of rebellion; Original Stories, a woman's educational fable and a Pricean moral tract. Wollstonecraft's attempt to use the male tradition of philosophy and pedagogy within the literary structures that made up the tradition shared by late eighteenth-century women writers was, however, ultimately doomed to failure for many reasons, not the least of which was her own ambition and ambivalence.

If Wollstonecraft had been content to incorporate the pedagogical views of men like Locke and Rousseau into her own, she would have had little difficulty. But from the beginning she was interested in the philosophy out of which the pedagogy developed, just as she was as interested in Price's moral philosophy as in his moral strictures, and she could no more settle for a superficial adoption of anyone's views than she could resist exploring their implications. Thus, the early works become an exploration of how the mind (and the female mind in particular) works and, ultimately, an attempt to use the ideas of men to justify her own belief that women should be taught to think for themselves. However, a woman writer's work, like the woman's world in general, was circumscribed by a set of unwritten rules that clearly defined what it might or might not say, and the more Wollstonecraft attempted to move from methodological recommendations about how women should be educated to philosophical explanations on the order of why, the closer she came to breaking those rules.

The attempt to incorporate male philosophy into the female literary tradition and to combine the best of both male and female pedagogical traditions and to do both without transgressing against the feminine code was productive of tension. This tension is minimal in Thoughts, all but destroys Mary, and at its height in Original Stories, where it is, however, turned to good literary purpose as the division between the text and the subtext creates a powerful kind of compulsion in the work as a whole. The aim of all three books is to reconcile opposing positions or to create a pragmatic and humanly healthy balance between extremes of various kinds. None of the three can be said to do this, but it is the first, and not the last, book in the early period that comes closest to realizing its intent.

As the tension of approaching taboo subjects increases and Wollstonecraft begins to doubt the possibility of integrating the duty of a woman to herself with her duty to society, the realistic accommodation of Thoughts breaks down into the almost schizophrenic split of Mary and then retreats to the moral rigidity of the Stories. This change is accompanied by a change in narrative stance: in Thoughts the author speaks directly to the reader in the first person; the authorial voice is still heard in Mary, but so faintly that it is often impossible to extricate it from the heroine's comments or to know what the author's attitude towards her heroine is; and by Original Stories the move from authorial direct participation to distanced impersonality has been completed to the degree that the authorial voice cannot be said to reside in any single character or to adopt any one point of view.

The very inability to reduce the author's point of view to any one character is, of course, what makes Original Stories the best of these works in terms of literary accomplishment, but there can be little doubt that it is the least straightforward and the least optimistic of the early works. It is also both less and more conventional than the other two books, for paradoxically, as Wollstonecraft comes more and more to insist upon female independence, she also becomes more and more careful to throw a patina of conventionality over her work, almost as if she were deliberately attempting to disguise its real nature. It was a strategy used with amazing regularity by women writers of the period and, it must be said, used with equally amazing success, for under the guise of respectability and diffidence which could be secured by the simple expedient of ending a book with a recommendation for reason, religion, and obedience or resignation, a good many "subversive" notions could be slipped unnoticed between its covers. Wollstonecraft was not, then, doing anything particularly new, but it was the kind of artifice that she herself, however much she may have sensed its necessity, could not condone in others and could not have been totally comfortable with in herself.

The Female Reader, the last work produced in the early period, not only confirms this pattern of growing discontent controlled by increasing authorial distance from its material, but also proves that, if Wollstonecraft was not incapable of subterfuge, neither was she able to sustain it for long, nor always able to restrain and shape it to literary advantage.

The Female Reader or Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse Selected from the Best Writers and Disposed under Proper Heads for the Improvement of Young Women[1] is an anthology consciously designed along the lines of Enfield's _Speaker_.[2] Despite the fact that it was probably a piece of hack work undertaken at Johnson's direction[3] and is by its own admission imitative, it was written in 1788, published in 1789, and its very proximity in time to the early work, and to Original Stories in particular, makes it of interest here. If nothing else, because it is an anthology it provides tangible proof of the very wide range and the nature of the work Wollstonecraft read in her attempt to educate herself, for The Female Reader is a collection and a representative sample of received opinion of all shades.[4]

The anthology, however, not only documents the nature and extent of Wollstonecraft's reading, but demonstrates the ways in which she used the ideas of others to test and develop her own. It is of particular interest here to note the way the selections from women writers are set against those from male ones, as if the two were designed to correct one another. This is, of course, part of Wollstonecraft's attempt to achieve balance and is indicative of the ways in which she constantly tried to make various views of truth and virtue, various and often contradictory views of the nature and duty of woman, fit together into a consistent whole. The anthology's attempt to construct a moral philosophy that would allow Wollstonecraft to integrate her religious with her social and aesthetic views is, however, interfered with by her obvious difficulty in forcing her own experience and ideas on women to coincide with the overall picture of womanhood painted by her society. The varying views of women that are offered in the anthology are presented with distance and without direct authorial comment, but they are juxtaposed one against the other in a manner that suggests that each is to serve to balance the other, and it is this juxtaposition that elevates the inevitable contradiction of any anthology into something that is at once peculiar to Wollstonecraft and significant to the development of her thought.

Although The Female Reader does demonstrate that women writers were a good deal less conventional on the topic of their own sex than many of the men they were supposed to be parroting, ultimately Wollstonecraft's attempt to capture truth through juxtaposition cannot be said to succeed. Women must develop their minds and rely on their own reasoning powers and yet somehow remain submissive, modest, and obedient. Women must strive for improvement and yet remember that their attraction for men lies in passive weakness not in active strength. Women are morally superior to men and yet must obey them. Affectation is particularly disgusting in a woman, and yet, because there is only one way for a woman to be acceptable, affectation becomes a necessary part of self-preservation. The Female Reader may be said to put forth these views simultaneously and to do little to reconcile them: the quest for balance would seem to be coming dangerously close to a debilitating kind of paralysis.

The strain produced by this kind of contradiction creates an unease which weakens the structure of the book and reduces the forcefulness of individual statements within it. The Female Reader is not an Original Stories where contradiction is paradoxically turned into literary strength, but a Mary which can remain within the bounds of convention only at the expense of consistency and coherence.

The indirectness of the authorial voice only adds to the problem and is not strictly a function of the anthology form, but signifies the author's reluctance to be seen. Even her Preface, where Wollstonecraft normally spoke her mind directly, is curiously roundabout. It does claim that girls should learn to think for themselves and that parents do not pay enough attention to the educating of their children, but in neither case does it state its claims with the passion or direct forceful criticism that typified Wollstonecraft's remarks in the Preface to Original Stories, remarks she refused to alter even at her publisher's suggestion. Moreover, even in the Preface to The Female Reader she quotes from other people to back up her own opinions and, in fact, comes close to apologizing for her sex (and thus for herself) writing at all: it is, she says, "a breach of modesty for a woman to obtrude her talents or person on the public when necessity does not justify and spur her on".[5] In this respect it should be noted that, whatever the reasons, The Female Reader is the only book that Wollstonecraft ever published under a pseudonym and a male pseudonym at that.[6] It would be unreasonable to expect an anthology to be organized around the direct expression of its author's opinions; nonetheless, personal opinion is not absent from the Reader. Wollstonecraft's own religious and aesthetic views are implicit in her selection of authors and in the passages she quotes from them in the anthology. It is only on the topic of women, or on any topic that carries immediate implications for the female sex or its education, where Wollstonecraft's own conclusions remain obscure and where personal opinion is not replaced by any alternative structure or organizing concept of significance. And the fact that the author's religious, social, and aesthetic views are explored and exemplified with considerable success in the anthology only reinforces the interpretation that it was not the form that was creating the problem, but Wollstonecraft's own attitude to herself as a writer and female intellect.

Throughout the early work, Wollstonecraft progressively backed herself more and more into an intellectual corner: she was trying simultaneously to train her mind and to restrain the conclusions of her thought to the limits of conventional boundaries. In many ways, the power of her own intellect, which was gaining both strength and conviction, was at odds with the whole force of her emotional and cultural training. The strain of such internal conflict could not long be endured, and The Female Reader demonstrates, first, that refusal to move could only result in paralysis and, second, that if Wollstonecraft's need for wholeness, for emotional integration and intellectual consistency, was to be realized, she would require either a creative leap of the imagination or a broader social theory in which to put her ideas in play.

Original Stories marks the end of the early period proper. The Female Reader is indicative of a transition between the early and middle stages of Wollstonecraft's career. If her career had been true to the anthology's indications, it would have gone backwards not forwards, at least in respect to Wollstonecraft's attitude towards women's education. But within two years of her editing of the anthology, Wollstonecraft would publish her first Vindication. The second would soon follow, and in it Wollstonecraft would return to many of the writers she had quoted in The Female Reader, this time not to duplicate but to attack the contradictions implicit in their concepts of femininity and to spell out the implications of demanding women live up to mutually exclusive expectations.

The tremendous change in emphasis between the early work and the Vindications cannot fully be explained. Certainly the promise of social transformation embodied in the French Revolution had a great deal to do with it, more than any other single factor. But even that cannot be said to account for the change, for many people, and certainly most

Englishwomen, did not react to the news of the Revolution by actively throwing themselves into the business of political reform. The final answer to Wollstonecraft's responsiveness to new ideas lies in the nature of her mind and in the progress that mind had already made in the early work.

The early work had steeled Wollstonecraft to the endurance of conflict and, in many ways, prepared her to accept enormous changes in her world view. Virginia Woolf suggests that Mary Wollstonecraft had always been involved in "an attempt to make human conventions conform more closely to human needs".[7] It is an attempt exemplified in her early works both in her need to reconcile the demands of reason with the claims of emotion and in her intellectual explorations of Locke, Rousseau, and Price--men who with good reason have been called fathers of the Revolution Wollstonecraft was now ready to embrace.

The Vindications were different from the early work. But what changed was the emphasis placed on certain ideas and the relation of one idea to another, rather than the ideas themselves. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman may be seen as the culmination of Wollstonecraft's early work: it adopts the direct first-person authorial voice of Thoughts; extends and clarifies the ambitious themes of Mary; places the morality of Original Stories in a political and cultural context; and develops the flashes of passion which had always enlivened and intensified the early work into a consistent and powerful rhetoric. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman is a woman's book, and it represents one possible culmination of the concerns and attitudes implicit in the work of late eighteenth-century women writers. It is also a feminist book, and it is important to note that its feminism resides not only in its ideas or its commitment to revolutionary ideals, but also in the anger and contempt of its tone--a tone which was, at least in part, a direct extension of the moral superiority that was the feminine writer's stock-in-trade.

The transition that occurred in Wollstonecraft's thought between Original Stories and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman was accompanied, if not actually caused, by the return to the directness Wollstonecraft had been at pains to repress since Thoughts and by the process of bringing the subconscious anger and resentment of the early work (and of Original Stories in particular) to the conscious level, thereby elevating it from the personal to the political realm and gaining a greater degree of control over it. This control not only allowed her to make explicit what she had often implied, but also to do so in a prose style that was as passionate as it was reasoned and thus, at least in language, to achieve the reconciliation her early work had sought.

The middle period of Wollstonecraft's career, then, was the period of polemics, and the Vindications contain some of the finest polemical prose in the English language. The second major transition in Wollstonecraft's thought is more subtle than the first, but like it related to the French Revolution. Faced with the Reign of Terror, and the increasingly reactionary tendencies of the response in England (which like the Terror itself forced her to accept that a new social order was not going to emerge overnight), Wollstonecraft once more found herself in the midst of a crisis of thought. Once more--as her "Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation" demonstrates in much the same way The Female Reader does for the earlier period--she was tempted to retreat. But refusing to choose the security of the old tyranny over the violence and bloodshed of the new, she rejected both, conquered despair, and turned her work in new directions.

Although this period was cut short by Wollstonecraft's death, Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, the private letters written during the last years of her life, and what we have of the unfinished Wrongs of Woman indicate the directions in which Wollstonecraft was moving. Like the early and middle works, this late work is concerned with exploring the human mind and, in particular, its capacity for change. It is pre-Romantic in its lyricism and in its attempt to discover the universal through the particular and "modern" in its concern with questions of psychological conditioning versus psychological identity, integration, and integrity. These were not new questions for Wollstonecraft—all her work had concerned itself with them—but in the late writings they were phrased in a new tone: the authorial voice was not only direct and strong, but paradoxically softer and more personal than it had been in either the early or middle works. If the emotional power of the early work had been derived, at least in part, from subconscious tensions that charged its material and if the strength of the middle work was its conscious analysis and exposure of the contradictions inherent in accepted views, the vitality of the late work lay in its attempt to discover the ways in which reason and emotion, the conscious and the subconscious mind, informed or educated one another.

This overall development is exemplified in the changes that Mary Wollstonecraft's religious beliefs underwent: she never lost either her belief or her faith in God, but as her need to take personal refuge in a personal God decreased, so did the orthodoxy of her religious views.

The loss of belief in a God who was an immediate source of consolation and who guaranteed not only relief from but reward for suffering was painful. It was also productive and freed Wollstonecraft from both a personal and a political tendency to look upon some sort of a Divine Plan as an excuse for human failure. In the end, she was not a woman who either made or accepted excuses. Her moral and intellectual integrity placed enormous strains upon her: to live up to her own standards required a constant search for truth, a rigorous attention to the processes of the mind and its capacity for self-deception, careful observation, thorough analysis, and an amazing capacity for readjustment. As Virginia Woolf expresses it, Wollstonecraft's life--and we may add her work--was "an experiment"[8] from the start:

> Every day she made theories by which life should be lived; and every day she came smack against the rock of other people's prejudices. Every day too --for she was no pedant, no cold-blooded theorist-- something was born in her that thrust aside her theories and forced her to model them afresh.[9]

Wollstonecraft's constant experimentation with ideas led to changes in her work which were both subtle and complex. The evolution of her thought does not form a pattern of rejection and conversion, but one of reorientation and reconstruction, and it is as much cyclical as linear in progression. The structural model presented in Elaine Showalter's _A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing_ (1977) provides a succinct method of recapitulating this development and, more importantly, of assessing its significance.[10] It is a model which offers a useful clarification of the extraordinary intellectual achievement of Wollstonecraft's career--an especially difficult task from the distance of some two hundred years.

Showalter argues that the female tradition in literature arose out of a conflict between women's need for approval and their desire for autonomy. Drawing on sociological theory to argue that women formed a subculture and women writers a literary subculture whose work clearly records the struggle for autonomy, she claims that the female tradition embodies three distinct stages of development. The first was characterized by imitation, the second by rebellion, and the third by self-definition; she terms these phases the _feminine_, the _feminist_, and the _female_.

The imitative or _feminine_ phase was marked by an acceptance of male definitions of womanhood and male standards of art and an attempt on the part of women writers to live up to them: "... rather than confronting the values of their society, these women novelists were competing for its rewards. For women, as for other subcultures, literature became a symbol of achievement."[11] The feminine novel thus evolved in accordance with male definitions of women's talents and sensibilities. It was, on the whole, bland, conventional, and "lady-like", not only in its content, but most emphatically in its language which had been refined and restrained to the point of paralysis.

But if feminine books restricted themselves to the concerns and language that men deemed "natural" to their sex, feminine writers did not. Writing was a self-assertive act, requiring the "cultivation of the ego rather than its negation",[12] and as such was incompatible with the culturally-defined feminine goal of self-sacrifice. Still, these women wrote. This rebellion, covert and unconscious as it may have been, served to undercut much of the self-evident conservatism in their work. It also served to heighten their anxiety, left them feeling guilty and defensive about their work, fearful of becoming or being seen by others as unwomanly or "unnatural", and doubtful of their own worth.

In Showalter's opinion, the stress produced in women writers by this conflict of desires and roles often led to a rejection of the self and thus accounts for the pervasiveness of feminine self-hatred as a major and recurring theme in women's literature. To redress the balance upset by their professionalism, to reassure the public that they were not encroaching upon male territory, and to ensure their own safety, feminine writers typically justified their writing by "recourse to some external stimulus or ideology"[13] and used their work to extol the very standards of feminine behaviour they were themselves violating by writing at all.

The feminist or rebellious phase of the female tradition was a phase of protest characterized by a rejection of masculine standards and values, an advocacy of "minority" rights, and a demand for autonomy. The very suggestion that men should have the authority to propagate the moral and social code that women, let alone women writers, were expected to live by infuriated feminists. They used their writing to attack the double standard and to condemn patriarchal religious attitudes, political conservatism, and the economic exploitation of women. They refused to see self-sacrifice as the highest possible moral good in a woman, recommending self-assertiveness instead.

Feminism, in Showalter's view, placed itself in direct and vocal opposition to everything in the dominant culture and simply reacted to male opinions rather than creating its own. Anger was the basis of this reactive position, and it was both the weakness and the strength of this group of writers. In fiction it "led them away from realism into oversimplification, emotionalism, and fantasy",[14] blinded them to the subtle distinctions necessary to create convincing fictional characters, and left them incapable of devising plots that were more than the predictable machinations of melodramatic villains against wronged heroines. But their polemical prose, hostile though it may have been was both coherent and penetrating and, ultimately, liberating in that it opened up new subjects to women. It also reclaimed the total range of the English language, by insisting upon its "right to use the male sexual vocabulary, and to use it forcefully and openly",[15] and thus helped to revitalize the rarefied style of the feminine period. While feminists themselves, then, had neither the energy, nor often the talent, to go beyond a mere rejection of the form dictated by the dominant culture, they did destroy the sanctity that had surrounded the feminine novel and thus prepared the way for the experimentation with form, structure, and style that was to follow.

Feminist anger, however, all too easily degenerated into bitterness, despair, and depression: faced with the realization that its work had not created a better world, feminist anger lost its force and focus, feminist writers became less and less productive and more and more susceptible to psychosomatic illness. Unlike feminine writers, feminists were aware of both the personal and political ramifications of sexuality and too acute not to begin to see through many of the defence mechanisms (like the projection of their own sexual desires onto the male characters they created in their work) they had designed to protect themselves. Realizing what they attacked in men might in reality be part of themselves, they felt forced to retreat. They were, Showalter argues, repelled by sexuality in a way that was new, and, as their depression deepened, their unease with sexuality intensified. The result was withdrawal: the energy and amazing productiveness of the feminine period and the crusades and propaganda campaigns of early feminism were replaced by fantasy and a kind of introspection that at base represented "a flight from men and from adult sexuality".[16]

The third or female phase in Showalter's scheme is characterized by its search for self-realization and is centered in what she calls "courageous self-exploration".[17] This, in her opinion, freed women writers, to a large degree, from both feminine imitation of and feminist opposition to the dominant or male culture. It is thus a more genuinely creative position, because the female writer regards her work as a serious and independent function of her own imagination and intellect, not as a response to male pronouncements on womanhood. Female writers still have to contend with the legacies left by feminine self-hatred and feminist withdrawal, but female writing is in essence the attempt to integrate the strengths of the feminine position with those of the feminist one and to overcome the limitations of each of the two earlier phases.

Showalter's view is, then, a dialectical one: feminine is the thesis; feminist, the antithesis; and female, the synthesis. Female writers attempt to create this synthesis on both thematic and stylistic levels. Showalter argues that the early stage of female writing still did not come to terms with sexuality, but instead of projecting it onto the male characters in their work (as feminine and feminist writers had done) they projected it into words, phrases, and sentences--into narrative technique. Their work is (for Showalter) always interesting and original, but often lacking in vitality. Worse, in divorcing female sensibility from female sexuality, this work tended to create a "suicidal vulnerability"[18] in the writer herself, a vulnerability that was as destructive as the feminine self-hatred and the feminist withdrawal of the earlier phases. Later writers in this tradition did, however, according to Showalter, succeed in achieving a genuine and fruitful reconciliation between the feminine writers' concerns with "the conflicts between art and love, between self-fulfillment and duty" and feminists' awareness "of their place in a political system and their connectedness to other women".[19] And, perhaps most importantly, such a reconciliation allowed women writers to come to terms with their own sexuality and anger and to recognize them as "sources of female creative power".[20]

Feminine, feminist, and female are not merely other words for good, better, and best. The label feminine is intended to be a descriptive, not an evaluative, term and should not be seen as a synonym for bad or primitive writing. Showalter does imply that female writers are better than feminine or feminist ones, but only in the sense that their attitudes towards themselves and their work and their society as a whole are less fraught with emotional danger, less trammelled by an undue concern with the external standards of the dominant culture, and therefore less likely to interfere with or to undermine their exploration and expression of ideas. A female attitude may free the woman writer for her art, but beyond this it has little to do with the nature and degree of her artistic achievement and can in no way guarantee it. The ability to transmute experience into art is not determined by political or social attitudes, or even by the writer's attitudes towards herself and her work, but by individual genius or imaginative power or literary skill--qualities which a female self-defining attitude may foster, but certainly cannot create.

Thus, to say that Mary Wollstonecraft was feminine, feminist, or female in any particular phase of her career is in no way to comment on the literary or pedagogical merit of her ideas which has already been considered as a separate issue. For example, that Original Stories, a primarily feminine book with a strong undercurrent of feminist anger, may be considered to be better than The Wrongs of Woman, a feminist/female book, in no way contradicts the assumptions of Showalter's thesis. On the contrary, it helps to illuminate the compelling quality of Original Stories that makes it such a peculiar success and leaves it occupying such a strange position in Wollstonecraft's work as a whole.

Feminine novels, in Showalter's schema, are usually confused and often incoherent, but, in a writer of unusual ability, the very restrictions of a woman's life could be turned into an artistic virtue. In other words, the feminine preoccupation with the conflict between compliance and self-assertion, which usually led to paralysis, could in such a writer produce a creative tension and truly original work:

> ... the very repression in which the feminine novel was situated also forced women to find innovative and covert ways to dramatize the inner life, and led to a fiction that was intense, compact, symbolic, and profound.[21]

Original Stories is the only book in Wollstonecraft's early career that may be said to represent an achievement of this order, and if Mary Wollstonecraft's development as a writer is looked at from the perspective of Showalter's comments on the female tradition, that this should be so is not really surprising.

In Mary Wollstonecraft's Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, the need for approval and the desire for autonomy are nicely balanced. Wollstonecraft's entry into authorship was not charged with conflict. She wrote the book at a male's suggestion, she desperately needed money, and she needed it to help other people as well as to support herself, and having taught school, she realized that although much had been said on the topic of women's education "much still remained to be said".[22]

These were perfectly acceptable reasons for writing, and Wollstonecraft need not have felt that she was trespassing on sacred ground. But by the time she wrote Mary, A Fiction, Wollstonecraft had decided to become an author--"the first of a new genus", as she would describe it shortly after finishing her novel.[23] She had decided not only to support herself and her family by writing, but to make a career of it in much the same way as a man would. However much she may have stressed the financial justification for writing, her decision was a self-serving one, and she knew it. She was jubilant. She was also afraid, and Mary is a reflection of that fear, as well as a testament to her delight in her own intellectual powers. The novel is torn apart by the ambitiousness of its own themes and its inability to commit itself to them entirely. Thus, we have the heroine, a woman of genius who thinks for herself and who argues her right to happiness at the expense of conventional standards of feminine behaviour, and the author, who feels compelled to disapprove of her heroine and to punish her for her most unladylike refusal to live the way others have decided she should live. In short, the heroine of Mary is female, the author feminine, and the book, torn between the two, confused and self-contradictory.

By the time Wollstonecraft wrote Original Stories, she had not only decided to be an author, but had acted on the decision. Having been sacked because she was altogether too haughty and intellectual to make a proper governess, she headed off to London, and with Joseph Johnson's help, embarked on a fulltime literary career. Now, moral justification became increasingly vehement. The moral rigidity of Original Stories and its Preface's attack on parents (which suggests that if adults would do their job properly in the first place then women like Wollstonecraft would not have to write and publish tracts designed to correct their mistakes) reflect sincere beliefs on Wollstonecraft's part. But they also represent a kind of self-justification that became more and more necessary as she moved further and further away from the domestic realm which was a woman's "proper" sphere.

In Original Stories the conflict between Mary's need to conform and be safe and her desire to rebel and damn the consequences is intensified, and Wollstonecraft presents conventional explanations of misery and despair, only to undercut them by a growing blackness which is the beginning of feminist political analysis and anger. But the simultaneous intensification of both positions does not weaken the structure of this book. The very nature and degree of its author's conflict--the implicit threat that as she overtly defied convention in her life that defiance would somehow against her will creep into her work--leads her to seek protection in authorial distance and thus forces her to embody the conflict in the text itself and allows her to turn her own feminine self-division into a powerful moral allegory.

Thoughts, Mary, and Original Stories are all, in Showalter's terms, feminine books. But they are not only quite different from the work that would follow them, but also quite different from one another. Moreover, their differences, like their similarities, are less a question of what is said than of how it is said, and in this sense they are a reflection, at least to some degree, of Wollstonecraft's attitude towards her own ideas and towards herself as a writer. Personal attitudes may fall into general patterns over time, but they do not neatly arrange themselves into discrete blocks occupying discrete periods of time. And this is where Showalter's feminine/feminist/female model is particularly useful in describing the development of Wollstonecraft's thought without either falsifying or simplifying it.

Feminine, feminist, and female are terms expressive of various stages in a developmental model. As female was latent in feminine and feminist, so too are feminine and feminist part of female. Thus, far from being mutually exclusive or rigid, the stages are mutually inclusive and interdependent. Moreover, each represents not so much a set of ideas as a particular emphasis on or orientation to the ideas of the dominant culture. Looked at from this perspective, Showalter's phases roughly correspond to the early, middle, and late stages of Wollstonecraft's career and illuminate the ways in which they overlapped and the ways in which they genuinely differed from one another.

Thoughts, Mary, and Original Stories recommend that women be taught to think for themselves. It was a radical idea, but in this early stage it is so carefully embedded in a context of resignation and religion that, had Wollstonecraft not gone on to write the Vindications, no one might ever have noticed that these early works were anything but entirely typical and conventional late eighteenth-century women's books. In its tone and in its orientation to its subject matter (if not always in its ideas), the work of this period is feminine. It is imitative and within (if not well within) the boundaries of convention. But the price it pays for conformity is its failure to achieve what it is intended to achieve, for if the work remains feminine what the author wants it to be is often lost in the process.

The early work, like that to follow, is a quest for balance or wholeness. In the early period, Wollstonecraft approaches the common theme of her century, head versus heart or sense versus sensibility, by attempting to reconcile opposing views on the nature of virtue and on the task of women's education. In this, she follows the work of others, but never stoops to slavish imitation. On the contrary, not only did Wollstonecraft claim to value originality, but she went a long way to realizing that claim even in her early work. In the female tradition she drew on the work of Trimmer, Genlis, Chapone, Barbauld, and More--women who, however much they may have been careful not to offend the current standards of femininity in their work, were, nonetheless, toughminded and outspoken in their views. Having first selected what she considered to be the best of this tradition, Wollstonecraft then proceeded to refashion it to suit her own purposes. Similarly, she used the ideas of men, but men such as Locke, Rousseau, Price, or even Day, or Blair could not exactly be said to represent the views of the dominant male culture or standard male opinion with perfect fidelity. Dr. Gregory's views (his book on female education was well-read and well-regarded) would probably have been a good deal more typical of the late eighteenth-century English male and thus more genuinely representative of the male culture that feminine writers tried to defer to. Locke, Rousseau, and Price were fathers of the Revolution, and if their own ideas on women were not necessarily "advanced", Wollstonecraft could "advance" them by using their own views of the human mind and of human virtue. As indeed she did. Wollstonecraft's early work _is_ imitative: it makes extensive use of the ideas of others to test and to develop her own. In particular she used the theories of men like Locke, Rousseau, and Price, or the implications of their theories, to modify the late eighteenth-century women's tradition which she herself was part of.

But to say this is to say that Wollstonecraft tried to use the ideas of men to justify her own desire to modify the very traditions she was still conforming to, and her early work was doomed to failure, because it was, in fact, attempting the impossible: the embodiment of the feminist goal of independence and the female search for personal meaning in a feminine form that would not transgress the feminine code of ladylike behaviour. The originality of this work is considerable and certainly its intellectual achievements are not negligible, but ultimately both were cut short by Wollstonecraft's desire to forge progress without pain and to experiment without risk.

And in this, too, the work is feminine, for despite its flashes of brilliance, wit, and arrogant assertion, it bears the mark of self-division and doubt. The confusion produced by the need to conform and the desire to rebel was in this early work handled in three major ways, and all three were typical of the ways in which feminine writers of this period dealt with the conflict between their professional and personal roles. The first was for the author to see herself as an exception and to heartily recommend to other women the feminine graces, the submission, and the propriety she scorned for herself. The second was the cultivation of a pragmatic commonsensical view which tended to elevate expediency or prudence to a moral stance that could be used to rationalize behaviour that otherwise might have seemed contradictory at best, timid and cowardly at worst. And the third was the propensity to view education as the means by which the pain of self-division, the conflict between duty and desire, could be tamed, if not actually cured.

With the publication of A Vindication of the Rights of Men Wollstonecraft moved into a radical stage of thought which, a little over a year later, became explicitly feminist in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Now, the feminist undercurrent of resentment and anger that had marked Original Stories in particular and the goal of female independence that had been present in all the early work were presented in a rhetoric that made the shift in Wollstonecraft's thought forcefully clear. Instead of asking that women be taught to think, she demanded it. Instead of holding fast to women's belief in their own moral superiority, she argued that men subverted the development of any kind of morality in women by conspiring to prevent them from ever learning to think and thus condemned them to a state of perpetual childhood. Men, she said, were tyrants, sensualists, and fools, and women, as they were, little better. There is no need to argue that the _Vindication of the Rights of Woman_ is a feminist work: it speaks for itself and must be included as one of the first and most important of feminism's products and one of the most impressive examples of feminism's development of a rhetoric which would embody defiance and express contempt for the values of the dominant male culture.

But the _Vindication_ is also a restatement of the feminine concerns of the earlier works: it explores the relationship between a woman's duty to herself and her duty to society as a whole; upholds a marriage of equal companions united in their desire to rear their young as the ideal way of life; and, with the important exceptions of resignation and prudence, reaffirms the religious and moral values exemplified in the early work. These feminine components were now, however, placed in a political context, and if in _A Vindication_ education is still seen as the solution to misery, now misery itself is seen not as the byproduct of internal conflict, but as the result of sexual, economic, and political exploitation. Thus, education had to begin by reforming political and social institutions and by restructuring cultural attitudes, if it was to be successful in the alleviation of human pain.

The _Vindication_ is a feminist book, not only because the imitative bent of the early work had given way to originality, nor only because Wollstonecraft had braved disapproval to speak her mind, but also

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because it is concerned with analyzing in sociological, political, and psychological terms the cultural attitudes that had made women so eager to conform in the first place, so willing to participate in their own oppression. Ultimately, it is not only a feminist, but a female book insofar as it tries to explain and to trace the development of the specific set of attitudes that conditioned women for dependence, schooled them to regard their minds with suspicion, and left them divided against themselves.

The female components within the Vindication of the Rights of Woman are subordinated to feminist analysis, but they are, nonetheless, present, and they are most clearly embodied in the book's development of a rhetoric and in its linguistic analysis. What Showalter refers to as the early female writer's experimentation with "words, sentences, and structures of language"[24] is clearly present in the Vindication's prose style. Indeed, the most striking aspect of the Vindication is its prose style which combines the forcefulness of feminist rhetoric consciously designed to shock by its blatant rejection of the rarefied language demanded by the feminine code (what Wollstonecraft calls "those pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence")[25] with the female attempt to make the style and structure of language function as a metaphor or paradigm of the ways in which the mind worked.

The works that followed the Vindications--and, one might add, followed Wollstonecraft's affair with Imlay and the discovery of her own sexuality--represent a new phase in her thought. The introspection, the concern with the internal conflict between reason and emotion or duty and desire, the essentially maternal and domestic character of woman, and the nature of love, all of which had characterized her feminine phase, return with new force and vitality in the late works. The feminist concerns with political oppression, economic exploitation, and cultural conditioning are equally present, as is the insistence that women must live their own lives and live them by their own standards. Letters to Imlay, Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, and The Wrongs of Woman are female, not only because they are works of self-exploration and self-definition, and not only because they claim woman's right to sexual passion, personal happiness and fulfillment, but also because they symbolize the genuine integration of the two earlier phases of Wollstonecraft's career.

By this time Wollstonecraft had (as a writer) neutralized the conflict between conformity and rebellion and was a good deal less concerned with the public ramifications of her work, than she was with the private struggle to shape her ideas into a form and put them into a language that would do justice to them. She had, in other words, outgrown the need to atone for writing or publishing and was concerned with the writing itself. The result was a work that was both personal and political and equally free of feminine self-doubt and feminist withdrawal.

This late work, like the work that preceded it, is an exploration of the human mind, but it is also an acknowledgement of the pain of growth and of the truly awesome or elemental nature of the attempt to integrate on either a personal or political level the abstract truths of reason with the particular claims of the human heart. The feminine, feminist, and female phases of Wollstonecraft's career were all directly concerned with reform, and, in all three, she saw education as the means by which both moral and intellectual improvement were to be secured. But in the late work, the training of the heart and mind are advocated by a woman who has achieved a new understanding of the genuine difficulties of such an education and a new compassion for the suffering of her fellow man.

One of the advantages of looking at Wollstonecraft's thought from the perspective of Showalter's developmental model is that it demonstrates the importance of the early work to the evolution of Wollstonecraft's thought as a whole. Without the feminine, there could have been no feminist or female stages. The early works were in fact experiments which represent the lengths to which Wollstonecraft went to find some way of reconciling her own opinions with established or received ones. That she failed is clear from the fact that she went on to write the Vindications. And thus at least in one sense, the very failure of the early work was responsible for the writing of the Vindications.

More importantly, however, the early work laid the intellectual groundwork on which the rest of Wollstonecraft's career was based. In tracing the ideas of men like Locke, Rousseau, and Price, in consciously modelling herself on some of the best minds of the day, in articulating her thoughts on paper, and in presuming to publish them, Wollstonecraft was doing exactly what her work recommended to other women: she was teaching herself to think. "The power of generalizing ideas, of drawing comprehensive conclusions from individual observations, is the only acquirement, for an immortal being, that really deserves the name of knowledge."[26] Gaining this kind of knowledge was what Wollstonecraft had worked for for years, and in the early work she constantly tests and expands her grasp "of drawing comprehensive conclusions from individual observations" both by tracing the process in the ideas of others and by developing it in her own work. By the time she decided to defy convention in print, she had a mind more than equal to the task--a mind that had been strengthened by study and discipline and made supple by the very strategies she had devised to justify the conformity to received opinion that she was now about to attack.

This achievement can only be appreciated by comparison, for Wollstonecraft did in ten years what, according to Showalter, it has taken women's literature in general over a hundred years to achieve. The female tradition is marked, and indeed defined, by the slowness of its progress--cycles within cycles, each building on the work of past generations, each moving so slowly that it took over a century for women writers to free themselves from male domination and produce "a literature of their own".[27] In this context, Mary Wollstonecraft's career stands out like a beacon, anticipating and encapsulating the history of a whole tradition and the struggle of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for female emancipation.

It is, moreover, an achievement which cannot be seen solely as a female triumph, for the conflict between the need for approval and the desire for autonomy is not only a female conflict but, ultimately, a human one. If it is not true that cultural restraints have made it more difficult for women to achieve autonomy--and surely as many women as men have done so in their private lives--it is nonetheless true that cultural biases have made it less likely that a woman will forge her identity in public and in print. That Wollstonecraft did so is both a vindication of her courage and a testament to the power of her intellect.

NOTES

[1] The Female Reader was published under the pseudonym Mr. Cresswick and was until very recently believed to be lost. Standard biographies refer to it, but do not discuss it. It was made available to me through the kind offices of Dr. Gary Kelly, University of Alberta.

[2] Mr. Cresswick [Mary Wollstonecraft], Preface to The Female Reader or Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse Selected from the Best Writers and Disposed Under Proper Heads for the Improvement of Young Women, Microfilm copy of British Museum holding, p. iii.

[3] See Wardle, M.W., p. 102.

[4] The Female Reader contains long extracts from the Bible, and from the writings of Milton and Shakespeare as well as from those of Dr. Gregory, Richardson, Madame Genlis, Barbauld, Chapone, Trimmer, Mrs. Talbot, Charlotte Smith, Lady Pennington, James Usher, Hugh Blair, Goldsmith, Lord Halifax, Cowper, Chesterfield, Lavater, Young, Hume, Voltaire, Dr. Johnson, Steele, Swift, and Sterne. It also includes selections or stories from periodicals like The Mirror, The Connoisseur, The Adventurer, The Spectator, The Guardian, and The Rambler. One might add for interest's sake that it also quotes from Wollstonecraft's own Thoughts and Original Stories and contains a preface and two prayers written by Wollstonecraft herself.

[5] M.W., Preface, The Female Reader, p. iv.

[6] It is not known why The Female Reader was published under a pseudonym and why in particular it was published under a male pseudonym rather than either anonymously or published under the very common "by a lady" byline. Godwin says that it was "from a cause not worth mentioning ... printed with a different name in the title-page" (Memoirs, p. 45). Despite then the fact that I am inclined to think the pseudonym had something to do with MW not being too happy with this work, her decision not to publish under her own name could have been for some strictly pragmatic reason or in fact a decision taken by her publisher without even consulting her.

[7] Virginia Woolf, "Mary Wollstonecraft" in The Common Reader, Second Series (1932; rpt. London: The Hogarth Press, 1959), p. 163.

[8] Woolf, p. 163.

[9] Woolf, p. 159.

[10] Showalter's thesis is to a certain extent built on the work of critics like J.M.S. Tompkins and Ellen Moers, critics who have been

quoted extensively in the body of this thesis. Tompkins and Moers are in fact more directly relevant to our topic here, because they deal with the eighteenth-century female tradition, while Showalter does not. Nonetheless, Showalter's structural model provides a useful means of recapitulating the arguments and conclusions drawn throughout this study and helps to place M.W.'s work in a larger context at the same time. It should be noted, however, that I have merely abstracted Showalter's basic theory from her A Literature of Their Own to use for my own purposes. Some of these purposes would not be in accord in Showalter's own: for example she explicitly excludes eighteenth-century women writers from her discussion because she does not believe they either regarded their work as being connected to their female experience or took themselves seriously as professional writers; that I think she is wrong on this issue is neither her nor there, as the issue is not to discuss the merits or weaknesses of either Showalter's theory or her own application of it, but merely to use the theory or model to draw together points made earlier in this study and to organize certain basic conclusions about the significance of M.W.'s thought. It may be added that if Showalter's basic theory has validity, then application of it to situations or data apart from those she has herself applied it to should hold. And indeed, Showalter herself assumes that it will, for she remarks that it could be used to analyze the progression of thought in any one particular woman writer (see Showalter, p. 13).

[11] Showalter, p. 21.

[12] Showalter, p. 22.

[13] Showalter, p. 22.

[14] Showalter, p. 29.

[15] Showalter, p. 31.

[16] Showalter, p. 33.

[17] Showalter, p. 33.

[18] Showalter, p. 34.

[19] Quotations in the sentence are from Showalter, p. 35.

[20] Showalter, p. 35.

[21] Showalter, pp. 27-28.

[22] M.W., Preface to Thoughts, p. iii.

[23] "To Everina Wollstonecraft", November 7 [1787], Letter 67, C.L. of M.W., p. 164.

[24] Showalter, p. 33.

[25] M.W., V.R.W., p. 34.

[26] M.W., V.R.W., p. 96.

[27] The phrase, used as the title of Showalter's book, was originally coined by G.H. Lewes in his "The Lady Novelists", 1852, and is quoted by Showalter on p. 3 of her book.

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